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## Labour is ready to ditch Unionists

Colin Brown  
Chief Political Correspondent

Tony Blair has decided to get tough with the Ulster Unionists by offering no concessions to them on Labour's Northern Ireland policy before tonight's crucial vote of confidence.

The Labour leadership has written off the hope of David Trimble, the Ulster Unionist leader, delivering his nine MPs in a vote of no-confidence to bring down the Government before 1 May. The Labour leader is therefore prepared to call the Unionists' bluff over

into the Bloody Sunday massacres. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Sir Patrick Mayhew, is holding in reserve a further concession, to give powers to an Ulster grand committee to vet legislation through the Commons which could be offered, if the government whips fear a defeat.

Mr Blair said at the weekend he did not believe Labour would win tonight's vote, following signs by some Ulster Unionists they would abstain. Labour is prepared to test the Unionists' backbone on the beef issue, which is of crucial importance to Ulster farmers, many of whom are Loyalists, because the Labour leadership has now calculated that Mr Trimble will not seek to bring down the Government.

The Unionists may also have calculated that their best chance lies in propping up the Government until May to limit the chances of an overall Labour majority, in order to give the Unionists more leverage in a hung Parliament. Ms Mowlam is holding to the Government's line on the peace process, but she believes that a right-wing Tory Party, with Unionist support, will withdraw support for the bipartisan approach to Ulster pursued by John Major. "I am not convinced that bipartisanship will hold because I think we will see a very different Tory Party after the election," she said.

Ms Mowlam, who held private talks with Mr Trimble last week, said she would not soften the criteria for allowing Sinn Féin into the peace talks, but she is sticking by her support for the North report, and she said she was prepared to "look again" at the Bloody Sunday killings.

In spite of weekend reports that two left-wing MPs had been demoted from Labour's backbench committee on Northern Ireland, the Labour leadership believes that the Unionists are at a crossroads and will turn back to the Tories in the next Parliament.

The rival Democratic Unionist Party, led by The Rev Ian Paisley, is contemptuous of Mr Trimble's position. "Trimble is a leader without a party. There are at least three of his MPs who won't vote against the Government and others who are waiting for him to trip up so they can take over as leader," said one DUP source.

Mo Mowlam  
interview,  
page 2

tonight's vote on the motion attacking Minister of Agriculture, Douglas Hogg.

Mo Mowlam, the opposition spokesman on Northern Ireland, signalled Labour's readiness to alienate the Ulster Unionists, if necessary, in an interview for *The Independent* in which she predicted that the Unionists would revive their historic formal links with the Tories after the general election.

Last night, in a BBC television interview, the Ulster Unionist MP Ken Maginnis said Labour had made a number of mistakes on tonight's confidence vote. "I think the Opposition has got its timing wrong, it's got its objectives wrong, and it has got its relationship with other parties wrong, and that is not a good sign for the future," he said.

The Labour leadership is ready to call Mr Trimble's bluff over his threats to vote against the Government in the belief that although they may join Labour tonight at the last minute, they would not do so in any subsequent confidence vote, which could force an early general election.

The Government has offered a series of concessions to secure the vital votes of the Ulster Unionists and hold on to power, including a U-turn to lift the export ban on Ulster hares; delaying the implementation of the North report with legislation to curb the Loyalist marching season; and the expected rejection of demands for a fresh inquiry



Kew shows off its orchids

The Miltonia hybrid (above) is just one of the blooms on show at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, in south-west London where the 1997 Orchid Festival, which ends on 31 March, displays a selection from the world's 20,000 orchid species, 5,000 of which are grown at Kew for research and conservation, as well as for their beauty. Photograph: Jason Bye

## £30 – is this enough to make you vote Tory?

Diane Coyle  
Economics Editor

The boost to pay packets from this year's income tax cuts will be felt from the end of April: just in time, the Government hopes, to help sway voting intentions for a May Day election.

The increase in after-tax pay for the majority of people will be in the range of £15 to £30 – the latter sum enough to pay for three bottles of Tesco Champagne; a meal for four at Pizzeria and Manchester; a Superapex rail return from London to Edinburgh; a 22-minute mid-day call to Malagasy; or 12 one-hour swims at a local pool.

The reduction in the basic rate of income tax by 1p to 23p and increase in tax allowances announced in November's Budget take effect from 1 April and will increase most taxpayers' take-home pay by the end of the month. Somebody earning £20,000 a year will gain an extra £17 a month, and a £30,000 salary will generate an extra £31 a month after tax.

This year's tax boost is similar in size to last year's, which delivered the biggest one-off increase in spending power since 1986. This resulted in a huge improvement in consumer confidence last spring.

Surveys show that confidence has since recovered to levels last seen in the late 1980s, when the economy boomed following Nigel Lawson's 1p reduction in the basic rate of income tax. Government strategists are hoping that a similar boost this year will pay an electoral dividend.

People who will gain when the Alliance and Leicester and Woolwich building societies join the stock market, could also receive the letters telling them how many free shares they will get in the fortnight before 1 May. These two societies will

give out share windfalls worth up to £6bn in June, to be followed by the Halifax stock-market flotation worth £10.4-12bn in July.

The Conservatives' electoral hopes are resting on the economic upturn, and the tax cuts provide one of their strongest cards. Although mortgage costs are near to 30-year lows, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Kenneth Clarke, has become embroiled in an embarrassing public row with Eddie George, Governor of the Bank of England, over whether



or not interest rates should rise before the election.

Mr George has turned the heat up with an interview published in a German magazine today. Asked about whether interest rates should go up, Mr George downplayed the Chancellor's excuse – the strong pound – for not increasing the cost of borrowing.

Mr George said: "Past experience has shown that the danger is in not being able to recognise when to restrain domestic demand. Then interest rates have to be increased more strongly later, producing the type of 'boom and bust' we are all seeking to avoid."

## Looted gifts are tip of iceberg

Andrew Gumbel

The precious gifts of uncertain origin which the Queen, the Prime Minister and other ministers received from the President of Albania are potent symbols of the wanton looting and destruction of Albania's national heritage that has gone on unchecked ever since the country's emergence from communist dictatorship six years ago.

Under pressure from the Labour MP Denis MacShane, Buckingham Palace and the Foreign Office have been looking for the records of President Sali Berisha's visit to Britain in 1994 when relics from the Ottoman empire – believed to have been lifted illegally from national museums in Albania – were showered upon his hosts.

The Queen's inlaid silver box, John Major's flintlock pistol and Douglas Hogg's jewelled dagger may be the most striking items to have found their way out of Albania under suspicious circumstances, but they are

far from the only ones. Hundreds of precious items, particularly icons, national costumes and priceless Roman-era sculptures, have vanished from Albania's national and local museums and are believed to have sunk into a giant black market that is still thriving today.

Museums in Apollonia and Butrint in the south of the country, once considered among the most prestigious in the country, are now virtually empty. A famous weapons museum in the beautiful southern

town of Gjirokaster has lost every last weapon it ever had. A history museum in Berat, site of the first provisional government set up by the Communists in 1944, has been converted into a private video bingo parlour. The whereabouts of its former contents are unknown.

Much of the looting took place in the wild, uncontrolled spasm of violence and political turmoil that shook the country in 1990-91 as the Communist system collapsed and the country struggled to prepare its first

democratic elections. But according to Neritan Ceka, former director of the National Archaeological Museum and a leader of one of Albania's opposition parties, the government must shoulder blame for failing to take any action to protect the national heritage.

"They have spent millions on the police but nothing on a special force to look after museums and artworks," Mr Ceka said. "They have set aside no funds to recover objects stolen in the initial frenzy."

### Tirana attacks Independent journalist

The Albanian government has responded to *The Independent's* reports that it is in fact a gangster regime involved in drug-smuggling, gun running, sanctions busting and money laundering. The Albanian news agency ATA put out a government statement on Saturday saying that reports by the *Independent* writer Andrew Gumbel were close to what Albania's tabloid press has been saying in recent years. "The article alleges that civil liberties, independent media and democracy in general has suffered

under this government. The Democratic Party government, which was elected in March 1992, has done its utmost to build the democracy and the rule of law, despite the difficulties presented by the horrible communist government," the statement said. "This political bias in articles on Albania is nothing new for Andrew Gumbel," the statement continued. "I regret very much that a prestigious paper like *The Independent* comes to publish articles of that low quality written by an unreliable journalist."

### QUICKLY

#### BP accused

Bodyguards of a senior BP executive in Colombia threatened to "skin alive" a protester campaigning against the oil giant, alleges a Euro MP.

Richard Howitt, Labour MEP for Essex South, says that the Colombian army and some right-wing paramilitary groups have oppressed people who have protested about BP's operations in Colombia. There have been death threats and assassinations. Page 3

#### 'Daily Mail' censured

The Attorney General is to consider whether the *Daily Mail* has committed contempt of court by accusing five white men of murdering black teenager Stephen Lawrence. Page 2

The announcement came after the former Master of the Rolls, Lord Donaldson, yesterday accused the newspaper of interfering with the course of justice. Page 2

#### Musical discord

Two musicals which graphically illustrate the often huge divide between critical acclaim and public taste received major recognition last night at the Olivier awards. Page 5

#### Emu on a tightrope

The success or failure of a single currency will depend on decisions made during the next year, according to an authoritative new report. Page 18

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هكذا من الأصل

## news

# Contempt threat to Daily Mail

The Attorney General is to consider whether the *Daily Mail* has committed contempt of court by accusing five named men of murdering the black teenager Stephen Lawrence.

The announcement came after the former Master of the Rolls, Lord Donaldson, accused the newspaper of interfering with the course of justice. The *Daily Mail* printed pictures of five men under the banner headline "Murderers", and issued the challenge: "If we are wrong, let them sue us".

The *Mail* took the unusual

step after a jury at Southwark Coroner's Court ruled last week that Stephen was unlawfully killed in a "completely unprovoked racist attack by five white youths".

But Lord Donaldson told BBC Radio 4's *Mediumwave* programme yesterday: "The action of the *Daily Mail* has, without doubt, interfered with the course of justice. That is regarded very seriously by the courts, and it is known as contempt of court... It is interfering with the system of justice."

He added: "I would hope that

the Attorney General would refer the matter to the courts at the earliest possible opportunity in order that the courts may consider whether this is a gross contempt of court."

The Attorney General's office said later that there could be no question of a statutory contempt of court, which may prejudice a specific court case, because there were no criminal or civil proceedings in being.

But a statement said: "Lord Donaldson's suggestion that there might be a contempt of common law will be carefully

examined." But a spokesman for the *Daily Mail* said: "We are entirely satisfied that we have not committed any contempt, whether statutory or common law."

Contempt of common law requires proof to the criminal standard - beyond reasonable doubt - of an intent to interfere with the administration of justice.

The inquest jury's verdict of "unlawful killing" came after several attempts to bring a successful prosecution had failed. According to the coroner, Sir

Montague Levine, "a wall of silence and fear" preventing witnesses coming forward, hampered a prosecution.

A case against two of the accused was abandoned when the Crown Prosecution Service ruled in July 1993 that there was insufficient evidence to secure convictions.

The CPS decision prompted the Lawrence family to launch a rare private case against five men. Two were discharged at a committal hearing. Three were formally acquitted at the Old Bailey last April, after a judge

ruled evidence from Duwayne Brooks, a friend of Stephen who witnessed the attack, was unsafe.

Meanwhile, Frances Lawrence, widow of murdered headmaster Philip Lawrence, yesterday called for an inquiry into the Stephen's murder. Speaking on BBC's *Breakfast With Frost*, she said: "The murder of Stephen Lawrence was the most terrible death which reached and shattered the very core of society and humanity itself. I think there should be a full-scale public inquiry."

Media+, The Tabloid

## significant shorts

### Inquiry to be held into jailing of teenagers

An official inquiry is to be launched next month into the jailing of hundreds of 15- and 16-year-olds alongside hardened criminals.

Sir David Ramsbotham, the Chief Inspector of Prisons, is to set up the investigation following growing concern that large numbers of juveniles are continuing to be locked up with adults and older youths despite government pledges to end the practice. He is known to be concerned about the risk of suicide, learning criminal and drug habits, and bullying from older inmates. There is also evidence that some prisons are failing to provide the legal minimum education for the 15- and 16-year-olds in their care. Juveniles are now one of the fastest growing groups in the country's jails. In 1992, a total of 1,098 young people aged 15 and 16 were being held in penal establishments, a figure which rose to 1,889 in 1995 - a 72 per cent increase. Paul Cavadino, chairman of the Penal Affairs Consortium, said: "An inquiry is urgently needed, the number of juveniles wrongly held in prisons is rocketing. Regimes have been deteriorating and the risk of young people being contaminated by experienced criminals has intensified, along with the prospect of hooligan and suicide attempts."

Jason Bennett

### GPs give Dorrell ultimatum

Family doctors' leaders have given Stephen Dorrell an ultimatum to back down over "supermarket surgeries" or face a renewed threat of GPs joining the general election campaign against the Government.

The leader of the BMA negotiating committee, Dr Ian Bogle, warned the Health Secretary in a telephone call at the weekend that he was not satisfied with the amendment promised by the Government to the Primary Care Bill to answer GPs' demands. "It doesn't protect against the commercialisation of general practice, and it doesn't match up with the promises given by Mr Dorrell," said a senior BMA source.

Colin Brown

### Judges to rule on pain case

The right of consenting adults to inflict pain for sexual pleasure will be decided by human rights judges in Strasbourg on Wednesday.

The case has been brought by three British men who were jailed after the notorious "Operation Spanner" case in a group of consenting sado-masochists inflicted sexual torture on each other.

The campaigning group Liberty has backed their case, arguing that their convictions are contrary to the Human Rights Convention which safeguards against interference in the right to private life.

### Polar women in final warm-up

Members of the first all-women expedition to the North Pole donned Arctic kit yesterday for their final training session on gale-swept Dartmoor. A hike across the high moor from Princetown was followed by an exhausting session of pulling tyres attached to waist harnesses - preparation for hauling 120lb sledges for hours a day in temperatures as low as -45C.

The women are members of the 20-strong McVities Penguin Polar Relay, chosen from 60 hopefuls after a series of tough SAS-style tests on the moor last autumn. The expedition starts on 13 March.

### Rocket man set for lift-off

A British rocket enthusiast is aiming to become the first amateur in Europe to break the sound barrier when his home-made rocket is test launched today from an Army range at Otterburn, Northumberland. The rocket - built by Steve Bennett, 32, of Dukinfield, Greater Manchester - is being put through its paces to test its engine power, computer configuration and parachute mechanism, before a full-scale flight in April, when Mr Bennett hopes to set a new world record for altitude reached by an amateur's rocket - 15 miles high.

### Store in downsizing move

A range of mini-fruits and vegetables for children is being introduced at Sainsbury in an attempt to encourage youngsters to eat more healthily, and to address concerns expressed by parents and dieticians. A recent study for the Cancer Research Campaign found that in many homes Christmas dinner was the only time children received the recommended amount of vegetables.

### Lottery jackpot spread widely

Nineteen winners shared the £3,115,736 jackpot in Saturday's National Lottery draw. They will each receive £427,144 after matching the six winning numbers - 14, 21, 7, 38, 47 and 34. The bonus ball was 13. A further 41 ticket-holders receive £60,906 for matching five numbers and the bonus ball, and 2,403 matched five balls to win £649. A total of 84,551 win £40 for matching four numbers, while 1,275,960 pick up £10 for matching three balls.

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## Ulster spokeswoman makes clear commitment to peace process under a Blair government

### Don't wait for Labour, Mowlam urges the IRA

Colin Brown  
Chief Political Correspondent

Sinn Féin and the IRA have been urged by Mo Mowlam, the Labour Party's spokeswoman on Northern Ireland, not to wait for a change of government before declaring a new ceasefire.

"They might as well do it now, and not wait for a Labour government," Ms Mowlam said in an interview for *The Independent* about Labour's plans for the Northern Irish peace process.

There is a fear that there would be new conditions if the Tories regained power, and a more right-wing Tory Party faced heightened violence from the IRA. Mr Major has said he would want to push the peace process forward after the election, without divulging details.

Ms Mowlam is equally reticent about what she has in mind, but she is clear in her determination that the peace process will be given a push by a Blair government. The Labour leader is said to be very well briefed on the detail of Northern Ireland, with an intention of placing it high on his agenda, in spite of scepticism by the Unionists.

Confidence-building measures Labour would introduce include the incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights, discussions on a Bill of Rights, and early talks with the police following the Smith review of the RUC with the setting of targets and objectives. Ms Mowlam rejects an internal Ulster settlement on Unionist lines, and would seek better relations with Dublin. She would look again at the evidence for a fresh inquiry into the killings of Bloody Sunday, which is high on the Irish government's



No surrender: Mo Mowlam has infuriated Unionists by ruling out an internal Ulster settlement on their terms

Photograph: Brian Harris

agenda. "We want to make sure the talks are inclusive which is why we want Sinn Féin into them. It is important it is not just an ad hoc assembly with proportionality built in and rights protected. It is important there is a dimension of cross-border cooperation and it is equally important that the Westminster-Dublin strand - which often tends to be ignored - is part of that. We do not see the talks process as just Assembly-wide," she said.

The first sign of Labour's willingness to upset the Unionists and step out of the Government's shadow on Ulster came with the North report, which ministers refused to implement before the election, to the anger of Dublin.

Labour would implement the North report, proposing a statutory body to adjudicate on routes for the marching season. Labour has engaged in talks with Orange Lodges in its at-

tempts to avert a repeat of the riots after the Drumcree march last summer, and it is seeking more community negotiators.

Ms Mowlam is keen to dispel the impression that Labour would be "soft" on the IRA but is wary of giving details of Labour's plans, to avoid fuelling false hopes by the nationalists for concessions. "It is very difficult in the position in which we are caught now, where if we outline a whole host of things which are different, there is a tendency for people to say 'we will hold on and wait'. That does give a chance for a spiral of violence."

There is a chance of an unequivocal ceasefire by the IRA. There is a chance of Sinn Féin being brought into the talks process. My real central message is don't wait for a change of government because in relation to the kind of violence we have seen in the last 24 hours our position will not change."

## Ulster Unionists see no gain in losing Major

David McKittrick  
Ireland Correspondent

Ulster Unionist MPs are highly unlikely to lend their weight to any push to get rid of the Government, seeing little or no political advantage in hastening the election of a Labour government.

The feeling among the nine MPs is that the parliamentary arithmetic does not in any event give them a decisive say in whether or not the Major government should survive or fall.

But underlying this is a strong sense that it would make no political sense to throw away the considerable leverage which

they presently enjoy over a government which is clearly anxious to retain their goodwill.

The decision on how the MPs will play the Hogg vote of censure will, as is traditional, be taken only in the hours before the vote, but sources among them say it is most unlikely that they will vote against the Government. Even if they do, they will not wish to repeat this in a subsequent confidence vote.

The party's leader, David Trimble, may have more radical instincts, but it is clear that a majority of the nine are reasonably content with John Major's present attitude towards them and see no reason for dis-

carding what they regard as an advantageous position. One MP said yesterday: "There is no wave of pressure saying throw them out, none at all."

In Belfast and Dublin yesterday it was suspected that the continued refusal of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Sir Patrick Mayhew, to offer an apology for the 13 deaths of Bloody Sunday 25 years ago, was at least partly due to a desire to keep the Unionists on board.

Sir Patrick said at the weekend that an apology was for criminal wrong-doing and there was nothing to indicate this had happened.



Billy-Jo Jenkins: 'Vicious and ferocious attack'

## Girl murdered with metal spike

A teenage girl murdered at her home was beaten around the head with a metal spike in what police have described as a "vicious and ferocious attack".

Thirteen-year-old Billy-Jo Jenkins was found dead by her foster father when he returned with two of his other daughters to the family home in Hastings, East Sussex, on Saturday afternoon.

Billy-Jo, described by neighbours as a "caring, loving girl", had been painting the patio doors when she was attacked.

Detective Superintendent, Jeremy Paine said: "The awful thing that confronted him and his daughters on their return is almost unimaginable. This was a vicious, ferocious attack on a young girl in her home."

A post-mortem examination carried out yesterday revealed that the teenager died from severe head injuries resulting from several blows to the skull.

The murder weapon is believed to be an 18-in metal spike found by the killer in a store room in the back garden. It was discovered by police lying next to Billy-Jo's body.

There were no signs of any

sexual attack and the house had not been broken into.

Officers are conducting house-to-house inquiries in the area and will be speaking with Sion and Lois Jenkins, their four daughters, aged 12, 10, nine and seven, and Billy Jo's natural parents, who live in Barking, east London.

Detectives are also trying to track down a man in his 40s with

prominent birth marks or scars seen near the family's home on Saturday. Neighbours have told police he was acting strangely and asking around for accommodation. Police say the attack will have left the killer's clothes blood-stained and covered in white paint.

The Jenkins family have been experiencing problems with prowlers since Christmas.

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# BP accused on death threats

## MP says bodyguard of company executive threatened to 'skin' Colombian protestor

Nicholas Schoon

Bodyguards of a senior BP executive in Colombia threatened to "skin alive" a protestor campaigning against the company, an MEP claims.

Richard Howitt, Labour MEP for Essex South, says the Colombian army and paramilitary groups have oppressed people who have protested about BP's operations. There have been death threats and assassinations. After interviewing and tape-recording community leaders and pressure-group representatives during a visit to the oilfield region of Casanare, he is demanding BP review its relationship with the Colombian army. "I believe BP managers must know or should know about human-rights violations carried out in the company's name, and with what appears to me to be the direct collusion of some of their staff," he said.

The company rejects this, and says if it found any evidence of staff or contractors involved in illegal acts it would dismiss them and pass the information to the Colombian prosecutor-general. What Mr Howitt and BP can agree on is that it is working in a dangerous and complex social and political environment in Casanare, in the foothills of the Andes north-east of Bogotá.

The discovery of oil in the late 1980s attracted many poor people and two rival guerrilla groups who use kidnapping, extortion and drug dealing to finance their campaign against the government.

The army has come in to guard installations. Reports from rights organisations including Amnesty condemned the army for arbitrary arrests, beatings and killings of suspected guerrilla sympathisers.

The army has also had links with covert-right-wing paramilitary groups which use death threats and assassinations in

their undercover war with the guerrillas.

BP, which has invested £1.3bn exploiting Colombian oil, makes payments to the Colombian Ministry of Defence to provide boots, uniforms, food and shelter for the local soldiers. The company said 17 of its contractors had been killed by guerrillas. BP also hires a UK firm, Defence Systems Ltd, to help with security in Colombia.

BP and its local contractors have faced strikes, protests and blockades from local people in

ship with an army which carried out illegal actions.

Challenged by BP to visit the Casanare region, he did so this month, and returned with taped testimony which, he says, vindicates his claim. In one testimony a labourer with a BP contractor says three guards of Phil Mead, a BP associate vice-president and its most senior manager in Casanare, threatened him outside a meeting called in protest at the lack of employment. There is no suggestion that Mr Mead person-

that at an angry meeting at an oil well where local people were demanding work a BP community affairs officer telephoned the company's Central Production Facility. "About an hour later the army came in. They had helicopters... they saw about 50 people and realised we weren't armed. I am a witness where a BP person calls another BP person calling for the army to intervene. They said there were 50 guerrillas wanting to take over the well."

Mr Howitt said he would not name his witnesses because it would endanger their lives. "I've found there is a pattern. If you speak out against BP you can be roughed up, then be denounced as a guerrilla. And once you're denounced then the paramilitaries can threaten you or even kill you. I listened to these people and I believe they are innocent of any link with the guerrillas. They don't want to be involved in violence and they live in fear." He said that on his visit "We were constantly watched by the army; stopped at several roadblocks. I was ordered out of a car and shoved up against it. I don't think BP should leave Colombia; it's not the company which has made it a violent society. But they have to achieve the same standards for human rights as they would anywhere else."

BP said its policy was to "operate strictly within the law in Colombia, refusing to pay extortion money to guerrillas and relying on the protection of the police and army."

The company had found evidence that two of its contractors had links with the guerrillas, and had stopped using them. "We have behaved in what we think is an exemplary fashion in difficult circumstances," said a spokesman. "If anyone has evidence to the contrary, bring it to us and we will take it to the prosecutor-general of Colombia."



Risky business: The oil industry in Colombia has to contend with numerous problems. Photograph: Rex Features



Troubled history: Jessica and Unity (top) as children; Jessica in recent years (left); Unity, Diana and Nancy in their heyday; and 'Debo' - the Duchess of Devonshire

Clare Garner

Never marry a Mitford or you'll get involved in family feuds which carry on for generations. The sagas of the literary sisters go beyond the grave - and, in this latest instance, concern precisely that graves.

There was more than one notable absence at Jessica Mitford's memorial celebration at the Lyric Theatre in London last night. Nobody expected Diana, Lady Mosley, to turn up. The widow of Sir Oswald Mosley had fallen out with her sister Jessica decades ago and they had not spoken since.

But everyone was hoping to hear the Hon Deborah Freeman-Mitford speak about her late sister, the most rebellious of the celebrated sisters, who died aged 78 last summer. Debo, as the Duchess of Devonshire is known, was even down on the memorial programme to speak.

Debo's decision followed reports last week that the memorial gathering was to be a festival of all the bizarre rituals highlighted by Jessica in her best-selling expose of the American funeral industry, *The American Way of Death*, written in 1963.

Rumours that four undertakers would be parading their wares and a Cadillac-shaped coffin sitting on the stage summoned images of an occasion with which Debo wanted nothing to do.

"Debo took offence," said one source. "She thought: 'This isn't a memorial for my beloved sister, it's a circus in a theatre.' It's very sad. It's a total misunderstanding."

But organisers were doing their best to play down Debo's no-show last night. "She's the only one who is still fit enough to come," said Morag Pavich, one of the event's co-ordinators. "We put her as the member of the family that would most probably be there, but it will probably be Jessica's son, Benji, who will do something small to introduce the evening."

## No unity for the Mitfords - even beyond the grave

The official reason why Debo didn't come was that she was unwell. "She's not been in good health," explained Ms Pavich. "She really wants to attend but she wouldn't be able to say until the day. We're not sure she hasn't been ill. That's all we've been told."

However, a spokeswoman at Debo's house, Chatsworth, in Derbyshire, had not heard the Duchess was ill. "Her grace is

away, I'm afraid," she said yesterday. "I'm not sure when she is back."

As it turned out, the memorial was not the blindingly whacky event it was trumpeted up to be. The death displays were limited to books and films and a DVD coffin.

"There are no displays actually on the stage," insisted Ms Pavich. "There is a green coffin - a disposable coffin - and then just books and paraphernalia and the personalities of the day."

Some might say it would not have been a true Mitford send-off without a token squabble between the sisters. Since their early twenties, Jessica and Diana only saw each other once, when they met for half an hour as their elder sister, Nancy, lay dying.

"I quite honestly don't mind what Decca [a family nickname for Jessica] says or thinks," Lady Mosley, 86, said recently. "She means absolutely nothing to me at all. Not because she's a Communist but simply because she's a rather boring person, really."

Jessica's death from lung cancer last summer was not enough to reconcile Diana. "I'm afraid I won't be going," Lady Mosley said of her sister's memorial. Their falling-out dates back to the Second World War, when Jessica denounced Diana as dangerous because of her links with Fascism, and she was kept in jail for three-and-a-half years.

Six-hundred friends and family were invited to "Decca's" memorial. The speakers included Helena Kennedy QC, Maya Angelou, the American poet, and John Mortimer, the novelist.

Jessica was once telephoned in California, where she lived most of her life, by an English journalist who was writing an article about the Mitford sisters. She had already spoken to Nancy who had said: "Sisters stand between one and life's cruel circumstances." Jessica was startled into saying that surely sisters were life's cruel circumstances.

## Moving mountain brings end of the world - sooner or later

Charles Arthur Seattle

An undersea mountain block 1800 cubic kilometres in size, which is creeping across the ocean floor from Hawaii, could cause a huge ocean tsunami that would devastate Japan and wreck the world economy.

The wave would travel across the Pacific Ocean as fast as a passenger jet, yet would be barely noticeable until it approached the shoreline. Then it would devastate areas up to 300 metres above sea level, killing people and causing huge amounts of damage to buildings.

"The question is, can we forecast when it will happen? And the answer is, at present,

no," said Dr Paul Segall, a geophysicist at Stanford University, California at the American Association for the Advancement of Science conference here.

But measurements taken by radar on board orbiting satellites have shown that on the south flank of the undersea Kilauea volcano, off Hawaii, there is a huge block 20 kilometres long by 10km by 9km, which is moving at 7 centimetres per year, forced along by lava flowing from underneath it.

While that might not sound much, it creates the possibility of a "megaslump" - as the block crashes from one position to another, rather than sliding gently. That would cause an undersea earthquake equivalent in

magnitude to 7 or 8 on the Richter scale - which would prove devastating on land. Thousands of tonnes of water would be shocked into motion, and would head west across the Pacific. The tidal wave would take 15 hours to arrive in Japan, where the effects would be dramatic, and it could take years for the country to recover.

Fortunately, such events only seem to happen about once every 100,000 years, said Dr Segall. But they have clearly occurred before: coral remains have been found 300 metres up the side of a basalt mountain in Hawaii, a finding that cannot be explained by the rise of an undersea volcano, but instead by a huge wave subsuming the island.

While the technology exists to monitor the movement of the underwater block, there is still no way to predict whether the move - if and when it comes - will be sudden, prompting a "megaslump", or slower, like an underwater landslide. The latter would cause little damage.

"That scenario is more hopeful, but we haven't recorded any event like that happening. It's an open question."

One problem with a massive tsunami might be the public's reaction to such a spectacular one-off event. In 1960, a tsunami hit Hilo in Hawaii: when the public was warned about it, many headed down to the beach to see it come in. Sixty people were killed in the aftermath.



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## news



Well-loved: Rabbi Hugo Gryn, whose memorial has become a focal point for bitter debate Photograph: Sydney Harris

## In life he was the best-loved rabbi; his death is tearing the Jewish community apart

Louise Jury

Rabbi Hugo Gryn was a survivor of Auschwitz, a broadcaster renowned for his wry and compassionate contributions to Radio 4's *The Moral Maze* and arguably Britain's best-loved Jewish leader.

So when he died last year, many in the Jewish reform movement which he led were furious that Dr Jonathan Sacks, the Chief Rabbi of Britain's largest group of orthodox Jews, failed to attend the funeral.

This Thursday the Chief Rabbi is expected to make partial redress when he speaks at an evening of tribute to Rabbi Gryn. But in doing so he has angered many orthodox rabbis who regard the late rabbi's brand of reform Judaism as heretical.



Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

Five hundred people are expected at the ticket-only meeting at the Congress Hall, central London. Organised by the non-religious Board of Deputies of British Jews, the event is intended as a secular memorial. The speakers will not only in-

clude the Chief Rabbi, but Hugo Gryn's son, David, together with the Bishop of Oxford, the Right Rev Richard Harries, and Rabbi Tony Beyfield, who heads the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain.

But, by attempting to bring people together from all sides, the memorial has become a focal point for a bitter debate on relations between the traditional orthodox and the liberal reform branches of the Jewish community. The position of the Chief Rabbi is at the heart of the matter.

In shunning the funeral, and then attending the tribute, the Chief Rabbi has been walking a tightrope that many on both sides believe is an unsustainable position.

He is often regarded as the leader of British Jews and is, for example, the only Jewish leader at the annual remembrance ceremony at the Cenotaph. Yet his United Synagogue attracts only 40 per cent of the country's 290,000 or so Jews.

By sitting alongside reformers on Thursday – and justifying the decision by pointing to Rabbi Gryn's important inter-faith work – he will earn disapproval from his own side. Yet, if he fails to attend, the schism with reformers could be irreparable and his authority weakened.

Neville Nagler, the Board of Deputies' director-general, said that they hoped all sections of the community would come. "It's a meeting, not a religious service, and most people seem to find that quite acceptable," he said.

But not everyone. Rabbi Isaac Sufria, an ultra-orthodox Lubavitch, said he would not

"adjudicate" on what the Chief Rabbi did. However, Rabbi Gryn had been a reformer and "if Judaism means anything then nobody can change it... I cannot give credibility to something which I believe goes against the truth. All that I believe was given to us through Moses from God on Mount Sinai."

However, David Walsh, vice-president of the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain, said he would be very pleased to see Rabbi Sacks at the meeting. Any divisions, he stressed, were within the orthodox community, not between the liberals and the traditionalists.

Yet he thought it very sad that the United Synagogue of the Chief Rabbi – which, he said, contained "very much middle of the road people" – felt unable to take part in any service alongside the reformed synagogues.

Rabbi David J Goldberg, chairman of the Rabbinic Conference of progressive rabbis, said it was "ridiculous" that the orthodox should claim not to "recognise" the reform wing when it had been around for 200 years.

"This is where the fight is going to start – because we're not looking for acknowledgement. I find it unacceptable and bizarre that a person who has the allegiance of only 40 per cent of the people can be touted as a spokesman for Jewry."

However, he recognised that the Chief Rabbi was now in a difficult position.

"If I were a betting man," he said, "I would be inclined to put a small wager on a diplomatic illness between now and Thursday."

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### DAILY POEM

#### On hesitating to depict my grandmother

By Gillian Allnutt

*She must have alighted like a bird  
into Bertha Elizabeth,  
being the fourth  
of John King, Gentleman, late of Hartest, hard*

*by Sudbury. Late of London, now, her body lies  
alone, eludes me, bone of her  
impenetrable bone. Her  
soul – I wouldn't sentimentalise.*

*Her stone's among the stones  
of gentlemen within the wall, the toll  
of bell, bird-chortle.  
But she's flown.*

This poem is from Gillian Allnutt's fourth collection, *Nantucket and the Angel* (Bloodaxe, £6.95). The poems trace the spiritual biography of the poet's "imagined 90-year-old self" and is "dominated by powerful old women, including the mystic Julian of Norwich".

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Olivier Awards: Tommy wins top prize in spite of early closure and Martin Guerre triumphs after revamp

# Accolades for best musicals confound the critics

David Lister  
Arts News Editor

Two musicals which graphically illustrate the often huge divide between critical acclaim and public taste received major recognition last night at the Laurence Olivier awards.

First, there was vindication for Sir Cameron Mackintosh, whose much troubled musical *Martin Guerre* won the best new musical award. It also won best theatre choreographer award for Bob Avian. The show was revamped after poor notices, but Sir Cameron always claimed the public had warmed to the show more than the critics.

*Tommy*, a musical adaptation of The Who's rock opera, won

Nora in Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, days after American Equity cancelled the production's transfer to Broadway.

American Equity agreed to Miss McLeer going, but refused to take three of her male co-stars saying the parts could be played by American actors. Miss McLeer won the best actress award, beating off competition from Vanessa Redgrave, Diana Rigg and Eileen Atkins.

But the play which scooped a haul of awards was the National Theatre's *Stanley*, Pam Gem's play about the artist Stanley Spencer, winning best play, best actor for Antony Sher, best supporting actress for Deborah Findlay, and best set designer for Tim Hatley.

Sir Richard Eyre, the departing director of the National Theatre, received the Laurence Olivier Award for special achievement.

There was well-deserved triumph for *ART*, the poignant comedy by Yasmina Reza, which won best comedy.

Best actor in a musical was Robert Lindsay for his Fagin in *Oliver*, while Maria Friedman won best actress in a musical for her performance in *Passion*. Trevor Eve won the award for best supporting actor for his role in *Uncle Vanya*, and Clive Rowe was best supporting performer in a musical for *Gipsy and Dolls*. Tim Goodchild was best costume designer for *The Relapse* at the Royal Shakespeare Company.

The best new dance production was English National Ballet's *Cinderella*, the outstanding achievement in dance award went to Rambert Dance for their season at the London Coliseum; the best new opera production was English National Opera's *Titus Andronicus*.

In a glittering night at theatre's premier awards ceremony, the actress Janet McLeer completed an extraordinary week, winning the Laurence Olivier Award for best actress for her riveting portrayal of



Wrong note: Tommy was loved by the critics but its West End run ended early. Lloyd Webber's *Sunset Boulevard* had to be reworked to attract audiences. Photographs: Rex/PA

## Rave reviews that can lead to death notice

David Lister

*Carmen* may be not quite a musical, and according to many critics the current production at the Royal Albert Hall is not quite an opera. The reviews last week described it as "cheap-skate", "low-grade" and "third-rate - a disgrace".

But audiences, many of them new to opera, seem to have enjoyed the show put on by impresario Raymond Gubbay, and the number of performances has been extended so that as many as 50,000 people will be able to see the production.

Yesterday Mr Gubbay said: "I think I will simply not invite the critics next year when we stage the next opera. What is the point? They take up seats to rubbish us. And the public ignore them anyway... and enjoy themselves."

Last night's Laurence Olivier Awards highlighted the fact that there is a gulf between critical opinion of many of the big shows and the public's acclaim for them.

The Oliviers stand alone among the awards ceremonies in having a large representation of ordinary theatre-goers on the voting panels.

Whereas panels consisting only of critics often make judgements baffling to the public (such as Mike Leigh's *Secrets And Lies* being denied any prize at the Evening Standard British Film Awards earlier this month), the Olivier Awards for theatre give the public's view and this can be strikingly at odds with that of the experts.

The shortlist for best new musical consisted of *Passion*, *Nine* and *Martin Guerre*. *Passion* and *Martin Guerre* went on to fea-

ture on the shortlists of several other categories, including awards for acting, choreography and set design.

Yet the critics gave mixed reviews to Stephen Sondheim's *Passion*. And *The Daily Telegraph* panned after the first night of *Martin Guerre*: "It's not magnificent but c'est le guerre, continuing in plainer English: 'The result is a terrible tendency to humourless portentousness

in both music and script."

Producers are keen to stress that musicals, more than any other form of theatre, need time to develop. Both *Martin Guerre* and *Sunset Boulevard* were reworked and improved within months of opening.

There is no easy answer for the critics, who have to review the opening of a show rather than see it after its first six months. But the public certainly appear to rely on words of mouth, recommendations from friends and their own gut instincts.

Shows the critics gave a thumbs-down but the public loved:

*Cats*  
*Camelot*  
*Les Misérables*  
*Phantom of the Opera*  
*Charlie Girl*

Shows the critics loved but the public didn't:

*City of Angels*  
*Tommy*  
*Sweeney Todd*  
*She Loves Me*  
*La Cage Aux Folles*

Sir Cameron Mackintosh, producer of *Martin Guerre* and *Les Misérables*, feels very strongly that critics can be out of tune with the public, particularly with musicals. "Les Misérables at its Barbican premiere in 1985 got a very lukewarm reception by the critics," he said.

It is not just contemporary events which prove him right. When *Cats* opened in 1981 one paper wrote: "... Strange how potent cheap music is," said Noel Coward. And cheap, I'm afraid, is the right word of Mr Lloyd Webber's music.

Another decided: "It can't match *West Side Story* or *Chorus Line*, because though it tries to be more than a series of

charming vignettes, it doesn't really go anywhere." The public ignored the critics and made up its own mind.

The gulf between professional reviewers and public also works the other way around. *City of Angels*, a sophisticated and witty musical about Hollywood life, won enormous critical acclaim when it opened in the West End a few years ago, but the lack of tunes and poignant love story did not endear it to the public.

Such musicals stand in something of a grand tradition. The show pithily and publicly denounced on its opening by film director Mike Todd with the words "No Gals, No Gags, No Chance." The show in question was *Oklahoma* which went on to become one of the best-loved musicals of all time,

## Nobel winner may sue over gay baby abortion claim

Steve Boggan and Glenda Cooper

The Nobel prize-winning scientist who discovered DNA yesterday threatened to sue over a newspaper report claiming he advocated the termination of foetuses carrying a "gay gene".

But in the same breath, Dr James Watson, 69, told *The Independent* that women should have the right to abort for any reason, including dyslexia, a genetic lack of musical ability or even being too short to play basketball.

Dr Watson, who with his colleague Francis Crick, discovered the double helix in 1953, said he had been quoted out of context in a *Sunday Telegraph* article headlined: "Abort babies with

gay genes, says Nobel winner."

His comments provoked outrage in the gay community and among pro-lifers. However, his justification of them appeared to lead him into more extreme territory.

"During an interview, I was asked about homosexuality and I related a story about a woman who felt her life had been ruined because her son was a ho-

mosexual and she would never have grandchildren," he said. "I simply said that women in that situation should have a choice over whether or not to abort. I didn't say that foetuses found to have a gay gene should be aborted."

But when asked where society should draw the line over abortion, he replied: "Society shouldn't. I think women should

have the right to an abortion if they want one, irrespective of whether there is a disease. I am pro-choice and I believe men and committees should play no part in women's decisions."

"I don't see where you can draw the line. Some people might not want a child who is dyslexic. A woman could say that some day, if a gene were discovered for musical ability,

and her child didn't have it, she might want to abort."

"Someone else might say, I do not want my child to be short because I love basketball and he'll be too short to play. There could be 1,000 different reasons and many of them we would consider absurd. But I believe a woman should be able to walk into a clinic for an abortion and not have the state interfere."

Gay rights groups and pro-lifers reacted angrily to Dr Watson's remarks. Nick Partridge of the Terrence Higgins trust described them as "outrageous".

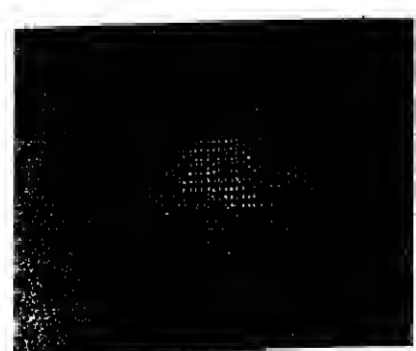
Professor Jack Scarsbrick, Director of the pro-life charity Life, said the idea was a "horrible suggestion. All abortion is an offence to the right to life of a child and a violation of a mother," he said. "To do this be-

cause an alleged gene is going to result in homosexuality is a terrible discrimination."

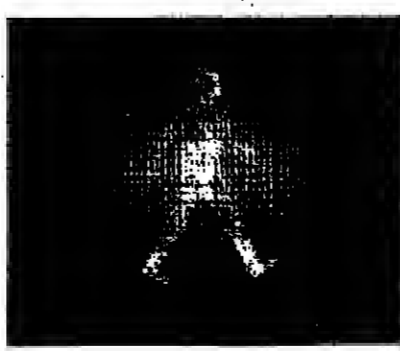
A spokesman for the Department of Health said that it would not be legal to abort a child on the grounds of future orientation: "Should a gene for homosexuality be identified, this alone could not be used under the Abortion Act to justify abortion."



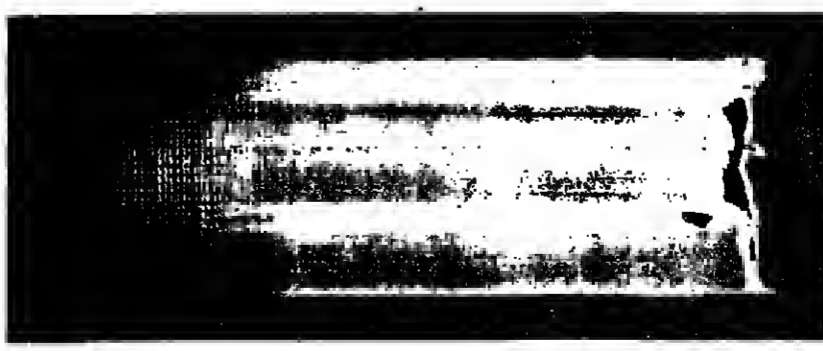
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news

# The Gospel according to Swampy

Issues take precedence over politics for young people, survey shows

Clare Garner

Disillusioned with politics and alienated from the system, young people of today are turning their backs on the traditional democratic process, according to a report published today.

Although young people (18- to 24-year-olds) represent a section of the electorate significant enough to swing marginal votes, only 40 per cent are likely to vote at the general election - a figure that slumps as low as 14 per cent among the black population.

While young people are more likely than their elders to participate in voluntary work, they are turning their backs on mainstream politics and the established forms of participation. As shown by the emergence of individuals like tunneller Swampy and 16-year-old activist "Animal" in the recent anti-roads protests in Devon and elsewhere, the youth of today is more likely to get involved in direct action. They

that Thatcher's children have more faith in Chris Evans and Gary Lineker as role models for their finances. The Chancellor of the Exchequer came equal bottom with Mystic Meg, with the support of only one in a hundred young people.

Bernard Donoghue, chair of London Youth Matters, the umbrella organisation for youth organisations in the capital, asked: "As politicians launch for the nearest camera crew, and young people become the soft target for those wanting to jump on the moral bandwagon, who is to provide a positive spin for a scapegoat generation? Someone has to ensure that their voice is heard, and ensure that the system makes an attempt to reconnect with them," he said.

In 1993, a survey by Social and Community Planning Research showed that 8 per cent of the total UK population had no interest in politics. The equivalent figure for young people in the Youth in Politics survey from 1995, quoted by *The Kids Are Alright?*, shows that the equivalent figure for young people is 24 per cent.

Young people's definitions of politics vary, however: 58 per cent of 22 to 25-year-olds believe politics are about things that affect their lives; 20 per cent say that politics are what goes on in Parliament; and 21 per cent say politics means nothing to them.

Individual issues tended to stir young people more than getting involved in politics generally: 73 per cent said they supported help for the homeless, 71 per cent rights for the disabled, 66 per cent the NHS, and 64 per cent animal rights.

Thirty two per cent said they had protested and 13 per cent were in favour of damage in support of animal rights. Other issues they cared about included support for single parents (56 per cent), employment issues (55 per cent), combating pollution (54 per cent), cracking down on nuclear power/weapons (52 per cent) and women's right to abortion (50 per cent).

Quoting a survey by Volunteer Centre UK (1991), the report argues that it is unfair to suggest that just because young people do not participate in mainstream politics they are apathetic. In the survey, 55 per cent of 18-24 year-olds had done some form of voluntary activity in the previous year, compared with 51 per cent of the population as a whole.



My generation: The anti-roads protester Swampy, whose views on politics and direct action are mirrored by many of today's young people. Photograph: John Lawrence

## 'Register to vote and naff up your ballots'

Daniel Hooper - better known as the roads protester Swampy - has a vote, but he has no intention of using it, writes Clare Garner.

He doesn't believe in voting: all politicians are as bad as each other and by voting for any of them he would be endorsing what is, in his view, a bankrupt system.

Election day on a road protest site will be the same as any other day for 23-year-old Swampy, who came to fame during the A30 evictions at Fairmile in Devon last month. "I'll probably be having some breakfast, doing the washing up, digging a bit

of tunnel and putting up a tree-house," he said yesterday. "I don't feel that any of the parties represent my opinion at all and I don't agree with the political system. If you put people in power they generally get corrupted by power, as is quite clear from seeing the corruption that's around at the moment."

Whilst he admits it would be "quite nice" to see the back of the Conservatives, he doesn't believe Labour would be any better. "I don't believe it would make any difference," he said. "For instance, most of the road building consortiums are

now donating money to the other side [Labour], so they are going to be just as corrupt. Take the Criminal Justice Act. Labour has never said they're going to stop that one. They just sit on the fence because they don't want to upset people and lose votes."

It is, he feels, time for the country to turn its back on the political system and prompt change through direct action. "The best way to deal with politicians is to fight them, but at the same time ignore them," he said. "They can't rule our lives if we turn away from them. The


more people do that, the more the system is going to break down. Now more than ever, people are ignoring them and they don't feel as powerful as they did before."

"People aren't interested any more in what politicians have got to say. We're only actively encouraging them by voting. Yeah, register to vote and naff up your voting papers en masse."

In Swampy's book, politicians have only themselves to blame for the state of the country. "The amount of damage they are doing is phenomenal," he said. "How the

hell can they blame that on young people - or anyone else for that matter. I mean, they're destroying the planet left, right and centre, they're pumping pollution into the air, they're sending people to war, and it's all about money."

But, he added, being young in the Nineties is not all bad. "It's exciting times in a way because there are a lot of things going on and we can make a change if people get active now. Rather than voting it would be better if everyone took their own action. I think we can change things in a different way."



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## Big union deal offers Blair hope of public sector peace

Barrie Clement  
Labour Editor

One of the biggest union deals in the history of British industrial relations could grant an incoming Labour government industrial peace among 1.5 million public sector workers.

The historic agreement, which attempts to abolish the occupational apartheid between men and women, and white collar and manual employees, is set to be signed next month on behalf of local authorities throughout the country.

The "single status" deal follows 18 months of negotiations and Labour's assertion that it would stick to the present strict financial targets in the public sector. Many observers predicted that a Blair administration would face strikes by

workers whose aspirations had been raised. This pact could buy industrial peace for two, or even three, years in a large chunk of the state sector.

Among the main concessions from management is the introduction of a 27-hour week for blue collar workers in 1999 - 36 hours in London, when unions hope a Labour government will countenance extra funding for the public sector. The clause on hours would bring the working time of manual employees into line with office personnel.

Unions and management expect the accord to be signed on 10 March, when an annual pay offer, possibly matching the present inflation rate of 2.8 per cent, will be tabled. Such an offer would take the £3.82-per-hour "national minimum wage" of council workers above the

TUC's hargaining target of £4.

The three main unions involved, Unison, the Transport & General and the GMB, are entering into a "social partnership" with the national bodies representing councils, which aims to improve the quality of work and the flexibility with which it is undertaken. Under the accord there will be one pay "spine" for staff and manual workers and one national negotiating table for all employees, instead of two.

Councils will be able to decide where individual grades fit on the national wage scale. Unions have, therefore, agreed to potentially large variations in the wages paid for any particular grade.

The drive to equalise the pay and conditions of men and women has been forced on the

three associations representing county, district and metropolitan authorities by legal action and the threat of more to come. Unions will drop thousands of industrial tribunal cases as a result of the agreement.

As part of the framework, councils will evaluate jobs to ensure those of "equal value" will carry the same pay and conditions. Part-time women workers will be among the beneficiaries.

Senior Labour Party figures are making concerted efforts to avert the complete shutdown of the London Underground system by electricity supply engineers protesting over plans to remove them from the company's pension scheme. Labour is anxious there should not be industrial unrest in the run-up to the election which draw attention to its links with unions.

## Broadmoor denies child porn ring

Broadmoor hospital has launched an investigation into how pornographic videos entered a rehabilitation ward.

The high security hospital, which houses Yorkshire Ripper Peter Sutcliffe, has rejected allegations that a child pornography ring is in operation.

Claims made by a Sunday newspaper that patients at Broadmoor are harbouring

hundreds of porn videos were described as "untrue" yesterday.

The chief executive Alan Franey admitted that during routine searches staff sometimes found unacceptable material but said: "There is no evidence at all of a child pornography ring at Broadmoor Hospital... we are a secure environment and that is why we have policies which

cover searching patients and their rooms."

A spokesman confirmed that two videos seized during a search of patients' rooms on Friday night contained pornographic material, although he refused to release any details.

The search was conducted following allegations of child abuse and a pornography supply at Ashworth hospital in

Merseyside. The videos at Broadmoor were discovered in a rehabilitation ward, where patients are allowed to own possessions denied to other patients, and where the ratio of staff to patients is relatively low.

Their discovery led to the seizure of several hundred videos and a number of computer disks from the 30-patient same ward.

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مركز الامن

## Business ploughs a green furrow to safeguard national parkland

Stephen Goodwin  
Heritage Correspondent

The mountaineer Sir Chris Bonington and the environmentalist Sir Jonathan Porritt are backing a radical green agenda for Britain's national parks involving private funding for energy-saving and landscape-protection schemes, chemical-free farming and reduced car use.

As the parks struggle with budget cuts and a myriad of commercial and people pressures, the Council for National Parks (CNP) - the charity which fought for their establishment nearly 50 years ago - is trying to set a fresh agenda for England and Wales's finest countryside.

It wants the 11 park authorities to work more closely with companies to head off damaging changes and for Whitehall departments to demonstrate their own "duty of care". It also repeats the demand for national park status for the South Downs and the New Forest.

Sir Chris, the CNP president, stressed the importance of getting across messages which made "links between urban lifestyles and the impacts on

beautiful rural areas". He added that the CNP had been trying to get board-level commitments to national parks.

Sir Jonathan warned that the pressures of modern lifestyles could bring "dramatic and irreversible changes to the landscape, wildlife and cultural heritage of the parks".

Damaging trends identified by the CNP study included power projects, such as hydro-electric schemes in Snowdonia, lines of pylons and even the proliferation of wind turbines, intensive farming and the pollution of water with nitrates, quarrying - particularly of limestone for road aggregates - and Army war games.

The council wants to see the spread of schemes similar to those in the Norfolk Broads, where Anglian Water and the detergent industry are helping fund the UK's largest lake clean-up project; in the Lake District, where North West Water is helping tackle nutrient enrichment; and in Northumberland where Northern Electric is partnering a £40,000 energy-saving scheme. In the Peak District, electricity companies have spent £1m over

the last 15 years on a 50-50 deal with the park to bury power cables underground in areas where pylons would be particularly ugly. Meanwhile water companies are paying half the

salaries of a number of rangers, in exchange for their logo appearing on park vehicles. Privately, national park officials argue that much of this has been on their agenda for many

years but point out that companies are loathe to offer logo-blazing sponsorship with a good PR pay-back than they are to accept curbs on quarrying and unsightly buildings.

Officials also criticised the council for failing to find new solutions to the problems of coping with the millions of visitors and their cars. Subsidised public transport systems have

been operating in some parks for decades. The Government estimates that more than 100 million visits are made to national parks each year. But a recent study by

consultants Deloitte & Touche concluded that the annual figure for the Peak District alone could be 31 million - and most travel by car. The Lake District runs the Peak a close second.



Flying start: Hang-gliding off Mam Tor in the Peak District, where the park authority has negotiated deals with the private sector to help preserve its natural beauty. Photograph: Tom Pison

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## Shops may be granted power to arrest and fine thieves

Jason Bennetto  
Crime Correspondent

Retailers should be given new powers to arrest and fine shoplifters under proposals to reduce the involvement of the police and courts in the crime.

The Lord Chancellor's department, the police, insurers and shopkeepers are considering new ways of clamping down on retail crime, which costs an estimated £2bn a year.

Under the proposed civil recovery scheme, retailers would recoup between £60m and £123m a year from shoplifters with an average fine and compensation of about £200 per theft.

The measures, contained in a report from the Social Market Foundation, an independent think tank, are a response to the spiralling number of shop crimes which result in a tiny number of convictions and fines.

The moves, while having the qualified support of many large retailers, have met with opposition from police chiefs, smaller retail outlets, and lawyers who fear civil recovery could lead to the decriminalisation of retail crime, allow rich people to buy themselves out of trouble, and lead to a violent backlash from offenders.

The proposed scheme would mirror compensation recovery schemes carried out in most American states. Joshua Bamfield, director of the Centre for Retail Research, and author of the new study *Making Shoplifters Pay: Retail Civil Recovery*, argues that out of 1.7 million people apprehended last year, less than 10 per cent appeared before courts, or were cautioned by police.

Under his proposals new legislation should be introduced to allow retailers to recover compensation via civil means, rather than a small claims issue. This would allow retailers who caught thieves, many of whom are shop staff, to demand damages or a "civil tort".

A possible system would be to fine the offender two-and-a-half times the value of the stolen goods, up to a maximum of £250, add a fine of between £80 and £200, plus costs. For example, if a shoplifter stole goods worth £30, he or she would pay £75 for the value of the goods, a fine of £80, and £80 costs, a total of £235. These penalties would double for thieves who are members of staff. Parents of juveniles caught stealing could also face fines.

Britain could also copy the US by making some experienced security staff "peace officers" or Special Constables and giving them limited powers of arrest, says the report.

Mr Bamfield believes between 35 per cent and 55 per cent of people would pay, which could raise about £90m a year.

If people refuse to pay, retailers or police could take out a criminal or civil prosecution. At present most cases are discontinued because they are too expensive and time consuming, for what are often tiny sums of money.

The report concludes: "Civil recovery will never be the total answer to retail crime, but could well be an important new tool for retailers - it may deter shop thieves and provide some recompense to shopkeepers."

Reaction to the proposals has been mixed. The report says that large retailers, such as supermarkets, are generally in favour of the idea although a spokesman for the British Retail Consortium, which represents 90 per cent of the country's retailers, said yesterday that it would not support anything that operated outside the courts, but said a fast track system was desperately needed. Small shopkeepers are worried about being targeted by disgruntled thieves, and the Association of Chief Police Officers has expressed concern that the system could result in fewer thieves being prosecuted as well as decriminalising shoplifting.

## international

# Berisha rejects Albanians' demands

Tirana (Reuters) — Furious Albanian investors staged more protests yesterday, ignoring the government's suggestions to shrug off millions of dollars in losses from failed pyramid investment schemes and to get back to work.

Several thousand protesters marched through the southern towns of Fier and Vlora, chanting anti-government slogans and demanding compensation for losses.

In Vlora, where the Gjallia scheme went bust and wiped out the savings of many residents, about 2,000 people carried the picture of a protester who was shot dead last week.

In Fier, another 2,000 people staged a protest, denouncing President Sali Berisha and carrying local opposition Socialist Party leader Petro Koci through the town on their shoulders.

In Tirana, police put on a show of force to ensure a rally called by the main opposition Forum for Democracy yesterday did not take place.

Police vans cruised the area and officers made sure people did not loiter after the football stadium where the rally was due to be held. Officers forced customers in nearby cafes out into the rain to make sure if any of them were potential protesters they would disperse or get wet.

Mr Berisha admitted on Saturday it had been a mistake to use riot police against protesters and said protests would be allowed in Tirana if organisers had a permit.

But Sunday's actions showed the government is still loathe to let demonstrations take place in the capital and was hoping protests in the countryside would diminish.

Mr Berisha said on Saturday that the government had warned the public too late about the dangers of the unregulated schemes. But he said responsibility also lay with those who had put millions of dollars into the high-interest schemes — and lost everything.

He said the state had no intention of reimbursing hundreds of thousands of Albanians who lost their savings and often sold valuables or property to invest in the schemes.

"We will not take this debt on our shoulders. No democratic government would do this. It would be cheating, printing money to pay and creating hyperinflation," he said.

Mr Berisha acknowledged many Albanians were homeless, having sold homes to join a frenzy of investing in the schemes which paid interest of 60 per cent or more a month.

Albania has been swept by demonstrations and riots since five high-risk schemes collapsed last month. Investors blame the government for failing to warn them of the dangers of the schemes, which said they were building tourist resorts, supermarkets and petrol stations but were pocketing the cash.

Bankers estimate \$1 (£500m) to \$2bn may have been poured into the fraudulent schemes.



Pointing the finger: An anti-government protest over the pyramid selling scandal attracted 2,000 people in Fier yesterday. Photograph: Reuters

## Tories were warned about crooked regime

Anthony Bevins  
Political Editor

The Conservatives have sponsored a number of financial aid projects for the Democratic Party, under the auspices of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy — a cross-party organisation that receives about £2.5m in annual grant from the Foreign Office.

Labour and the Liberal Democrats have also given assistance to partner parties in Albania, financed by funds from the Westminster Foundation.

But after complaints had been made about last May's Albanian elections, the Foundation obtained copies of reports from the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, whose monitors had witnessed widespread vote-rigging and intimidation by President Berisha's party machine.

One Westminster Foundation source said yesterday that after those allegations had been discussed, one Conservative project was approved on condition that the party should log its concerns with President Berisha's party colleagues.

It was also agreed that the Tories should carry out their own investigation into the democratic commitment of the Albanian Democratic Party — before putting forward any further projects requiring Westminster Foundation funding.

In one discussion, a Tory representative said that President Berisha had spoken of his amazement that Labour and the Liberal Democrats were providing more Westminster Foundation finance for his political opponents than the Conservatives were offering to his party.

The Foundation's governing body decided that the situation should be kept under review — with an implicit warning that the Conservatives should be careful if they wished to continue funding a party which had become essentially undemocratic in its nature.



John Lichfield  
Paris

Over 400 French actors — including star names such as Catherine Deneuve, Isabelle Huppert, Miou-Miou and Jeanne Moreau — yesterday declared themselves ready to go to jail if the government pursues new curbs on illegal immigrants.

The declaration follows similar petitions from other branches of the French intelligentsia: 58 cinema directors, 300 writers, 300 theatrical figures and 1,200 journalists and lawyers. Three more round robins, threatening deliberately to flout the proposed new law — from doctors, scientists and cartoonists — will be published in *Libération* today.

The ostensible object of the intellectual revolt is a draft law, due to be finalised in the National Assembly next week, which tightens existing restrictions on illegal immigration. In particular, the country's cultural and intellectual elite objects to a clause which would oblige anyone housing a non-touristic, non-European Union foreigner to obtain a certificate from the local authority.

The suggestion is that this would turn France into a nation of informers and snitches of the kind of registration of Jews which was imposed by the Vichy regime during the Second World War. In fact, most of the provisions in the law have existed for 15 years and were originally introduced, by decree, by a Socialist government

in 1982. The only new requirement is that the host must tell the authorities when his guests leave.

Furthermore, as the Interior Minister, Jean-Louis Debré, pointed out yesterday in the *Journal du Dimanche*, there will be no jail sentences for French people who break the law. They will simply be banned from holding "lodging certificates" in future.

EU citizens and visitors from other countries, such as the US, who require no visa, do not fall under the regulations. The new — and old — laws apply to other foreigners with no right of residence or obvious means of support in France. Mr Debré said. They can only enter if they have a certificate showing that they have somewhere to stay.

Why, then, such a great furor? By

the admission of those organising the protests, they are mostly aimed at the rise of Jean-Marie Le Pen's ultra-right and xenophobic Front National, following its victory in Vitrolles, near Marseille, last week. It may be true that the intelligentsia should have objected to the immigration laws before now, say the petition organisers. But a halt must be called at some time to what they call the creeping "Le Penisation" of French politics. The motivation behind the new law — and the kinds of words used by parliamentarians from the centre-right majority who they made it even tougher in the National Assembly — were pure Front National, the critics say. (The amendments were struck out last week by the upper chamber of parliament, the Sénat).

Mr Debré retorts that the best way to cut the ground from under the FN is to control the illegal immigration which damages the interests of legitimate immigrants and French citizens alike. Other commentators point out that Mr Le Pen will be delighted by the protests: they come from just the social élites which the FN accuses of betraying France.

An uneasy truce may be declared when the law comes back to the national assembly next week. The Prime Minister Alain Juppé let it be known yesterday that he would not withdraw the offending "lodging" clause. But he also hinted that he expected supporters of his own centre-right government to make an attempt to restore their FN-inspired amendments.

## French stars join fight against ultra-right

## Civil War Picassos to join 'Guernica'

Elizabeth Nash  
Madrid

Madrid's modern art museum, the Reina Sofia Art Centre, has bought seven important works by Picasso from the artist's family at a price reckoned to be nearly half their market value, filling an important gap in the museum's collection.

The acquisition of two drawings, two sculptures and three oil paintings crowns two years of negotiations during which three big Spanish banks put up the cash for the purchase — £15m — in lieu of paying tax. The

pieces date from the Civil War years of the 1930s and complement Picasso's cry of grief and rage, *Guernica*, jewel of the Reina Sofia's collection.

Claude Picasso, the artist's grandson, said recently that the family was prepared to negotiate the sale of other works to the museum, despite having neither the need nor the inclination to part with any of the enormous quantity of material still in family hands.

Madrid has long felt sore about being last in the queue for important Picassos. The bulk of the artist's work, from his young

and old period, is in the Picasso Museum in Paris or that of Barcelona. The Reina Sofia has tried to fill a gap by acquiring works from the artist's middle years, but recognises it will never be able to match the other collections.

Utterly typical for Spain, "Operation Picasso" — the Socialists' most ambitious cultural project — survived last year's change in government, and the former culture minister, Carmen Alborch, attended the unveiling last week to remind everyone that it had been her idea. Astonishingly, her con-

servative successor, Esperanza Aguirre, thanked her for the initiative.

The *Guernica* painting itself is at the heart of a tug-of-war between the Reina Sofia and the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, a futuristic building by the American architect Frank Gehry, due to open this summer. The Guggenheim wants to borrow Picasso's homage to the bombed Basque village as part of its inaugural exhibition, but the Reina Sofia says the painting is too fragile to be moved. A spokeswoman said this week the museum had received no formal

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A COPY of the said Petition will be laid before the Court for confirmation of the sale of the assets of the Company on 17 February 1997 at 10.00am and 4.00pm.

Dated this 7th day of February 1997  
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R. MEHTA  
Director

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NOTICE is hereby given, pursuant to Section 98 of the Insolvency Act, 1986 that a Meeting of the Creditors of the above named Company will be held at 6, Bloomsbury Square, London WC1A 2LP on Thursday 20th February 1997 at 2.30pm for the purpose of considering the proposed sale of the assets of the Company in the sum of £1,000,000 in full and in satisfaction of the debt of the Company to the Petitioner.

A list of the names and addresses of the Company's Creditors will be available for inspection free of charge on the two business days preceding the day of the Meeting at 6 Bloomsbury Square, London WC1A 2LP, between the hours of 10.00am and 4.00pm.

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## international

**Handover countdown:** As work on the colony's new airport continues apace, China tightens its grip on its territory-in-waiting

# Hong Kong turns its back on Rifkind

Stephen Vines  
Hong Kong

Malcolm Rifkind, the Foreign Secretary, is clearly vexed by his crash-course in the Buddhist art of clapping with a single hand. After his whirlwind weekend visit to Hong Kong it is clear that Britain's hand in the colony is relatively empty, making the visit little more than an embarrassing demonstration of British impotence.

This may be inevitable with just 19 weeks to go before China resumes sovereignty but Britain seems to be caught between stressing its long-term commitment to the territory and demonstrating its inability to achieve many of its last goals.

High on the British agenda is a rearguard action to stop China from watering down human-rights legislation and to prevent the establishment of a rival legislature. Britain has threatened to take China to the International Court of Justice to adjudicate on whether the rival body is legal, but the Chinese have refused, point blank, to go.

Mr Rifkind was repeatedly asked what action Britain would take in the face of this refusal. The Foreign Secretary flustered

and rather uncharacteristically lost his cool. He turned on one Australian journalist, who suggested that Britain was not doing much, saying, "if you have anything else in mind, tell me what you suggest".

A British official later said that it was necessary "to come to terms with the loss of sovereignty and the loss of control". Clearly annoyed that the Foreign Secretary had been accused of not doing enough for Hong Kong, he said that Britain had every intention of fully exercising its sovereignty until 30 June but had to be realistic about what levers were at its disposal after that.

Arriving on Saturday evening, Mr Rifkind stated that Hong Kong policy was "the single highest priority of our international relations" - but not of sufficient priority, apparently, to prevent the visit being cut to the bone so that he could fly back to Westminster for a crucial vote this evening.

It may have been just as well he did not stay. A mere eight of the Legislative Council's 60 members bothered to attend a meeting with him, and the press conference, normally packed for a visit of this kind, was only modestly attended by the local media.

Tung Chee-hwa, who will head Hong

Kong's first post-colonial government, spent less than a hour in what turned out to be little more than a friendly but silted chat, with both sides going through the motions. Yet Mr Rifkind insisted that in most points of handover negotiations "not only are we making progress, but most of them have been resolved". He even believed there might be a possibility that China would think again about reintroducing colonial laws which limited freedom of assembly and association.

It was hard to find a basis for Mr Rifkind's confidence. Mr Tung said yesterday that while he was prepared to listen to the public's views on these matters, "I have a set of values and beliefs which I hold on to very much". This seems a polite way of saying that the decisions are irreversible.

Britain's last hope seems to be to play the international card. Mr Rifkind stressed that Britain's allies would be called upon to assist the Government in ensuring that Sino-British agreements on Hong Kong were fully implemented. He said that Hong Kong was one of the first issues he raised with Madeleine Albright when he called to congratulate her on being appointed United States Secretary of State.



Press-ganged: Malcolm Rifkind leaves a news conference in Hong Kong yesterday

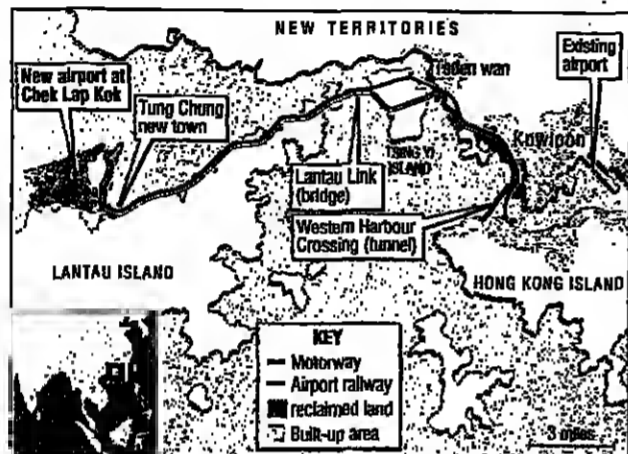
Photograph: Reuters

## International lift-off delayed by disagreement and distrust

Stephen Vines

On Thursday morning a small turbo-prop Beech Super King aircraft, loaded with VIPs, will touch down on the uncompleted runway of one of the world's most expensive and politically controversial new airports.

The ceremonial flight is being made to demonstrate that construction of Hong Kong's new international airport is proceeding at a furious pace so that it can open for business by April next year. This is almost a year behind schedule but, unusually for an important infrastructure project, the delay has nothing to do with building problems and everything to do with almost five years of Sino-British wrangling over the financing of the project.



On the ground it does not seem that the airport will be finished in just 14 months. The massive 1,248-hectare site is awash in a sea of mud, broken by the

year, and 2 million tons of cargo, making it the world's busiest airport. However it will be far from being the largest - it is, for example, about half the size of Charles de Gaulle airport in Paris.

A small army of 21,000 people, speaking a babble of languages, mill around purposefully under the eyes of hundreds of contractors. Only at meal times do the nationalities divide into distinct groups, with the Chinese heading straight for their rice and noodles, the Brits for solid Western stodge, the Indians for curries and the Japanese for their neatly constructed lunch boxes.

The logistics of getting the airport built are daunting. In land-challenged Hong Kong, finding the space was problem number

one. As a consequence a barely inhabited island had to be evacuated, its hills levelled and the debris removed; 10,000 tonnes per second were shifted at the initial site clearance stage.

Because the airport is not on the mainland it had to be linked by a 1,377-metre-long suspension bridge. A new railway and highways are being built and a new town is rising next to the airport which will eventually house some 200,000 people.

The entire project is being built in a six-year time frame. Given the tight programme, no one is taking risks with cutting-edge technology. Only tried and tested methods are being employed.

The airport and its associated projects will cost some £12.5bn, making it one of the

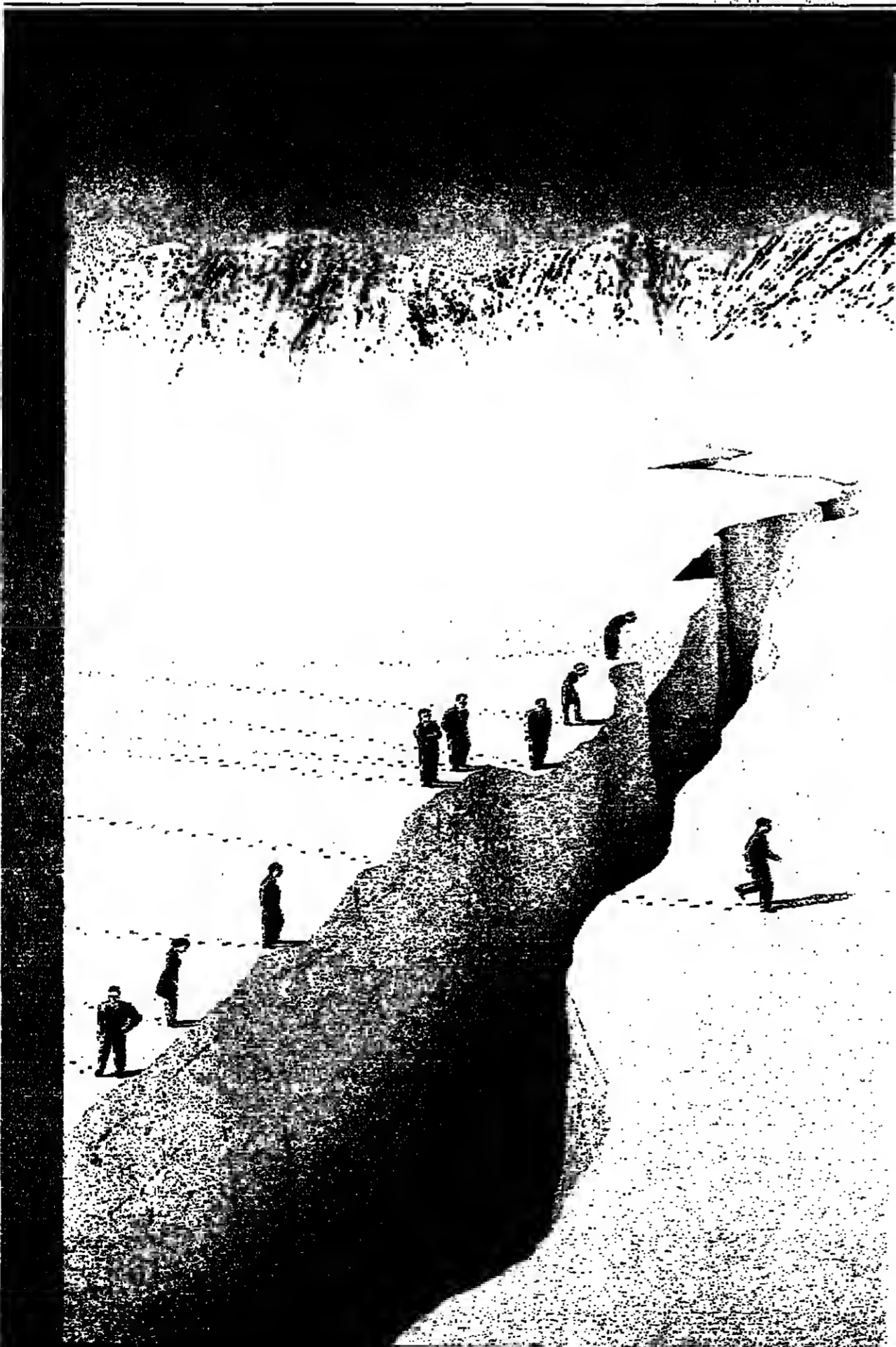
world's largest infrastructure projects. Originally the government envisaged most of the financing coming from the private sector, underwritten by state guarantees. However, China, which is intensely suspicious about Britain's plans for Hong Kong's impressively deep coffers, would not agree to any large long-term financing commitments which would have to be honoured by the incoming Chinese administration.

The Chinese seemed genuinely to believe that the British would use this big project as a way of eating into the coffers and funneling money back to London. But it is hard to argue that the colonial administration has used the airport as a way of rewarding British companies. The lion's share of the business has gone to the Japanese who have secured a quarter of the cash allocated so far. British companies come second, with 16 per cent and Chinese companies are in the third place with half this amount. The government insists that contracts were awarded solely on merit.

dangling the carrot of an agreement on the airport.

Even now China is making sure that the airport will not open before British sovereignty over Hong Kong ends. Peking did not want the territory's largest construction project open for business while Britain was running the colony.

The delay also gives China greater scope for running the airport, a delicate subject which is rarely discussed. China may wish to have a Deng Xiaoping Airport, named after the ailing paramount leader, or a Reconciliation Airport, reflecting the phrase China usually uses when talking about the resumption of its sovereignty in July. Alternatively the mundane name Hong Kong International Airport might be retained.



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# Mystery of murdered Tibetan guru transcends the merely mortal

Jan McGirk  
New Delhi

A wrathful deity is the main suspect for three murders in Dharamsala, the Himalayan "capital" of Tibet's government-in-exile.

But Chinese-hired assassins or thieves have not been ruled out. Superintendent RK Singh, who is investigating the stabbing of Lopsang Gyatso, director of the Buddhist School of Dialectics, and his two pupils, believes the most likely motive may be a rift between mainstream Tibetan Buddhism and a fundamentalist sect which worships the deity

Dorje Shugden. After the Dalai Lama warned his devotees in May against veneration of Shugden, cult followers in Britain and New Delhi launched a campaign against the Tibetan leader. Gyatso, 70, was close to the Dalai Lama, and his pronouncement amounted to religious persecution. Gyatso received death threats over the past nine months, said a spokesman in Dharamsala.

He was found dead on his blood-soaked gown by a student bringing tea on 4 February. His translators, Lobsang Nagawang and Nagawang Lodoe, sprawled on the floor, were

wounded; they died en route to hospital. Bloody footprints led to a ground-floor room, but the six Tibetans questioned there said a drunken brawl had caused the mayhem.

In New Delhi, six other monks were held, interrogated and freed without charge.

Shugden, a minor deity once worshipped by the Dalai Lama, is often invoked for curses, and traditionally brings wealth to believers. Gyatso said that although worship of Shugden has long been seen to be harmful to the personal safety of His Holiness, the Tibetan establishment could not ban individuals from following their

preferred superstition and could only caution against such practices.

Many Tibetans fear the Chinese, apprehensive about Taiwan inviting the Dalai Lama to visit, are exploiting divisions among his followers. Last year three suspected Chinese spies were arrested in Dharamsala. "A hired assassin could have killed the director," said Lobsang Temphell, an assistant secretary in Dharamsala.

Security for the Dalai Lama has been stepped up following the crime. "Security is always quite tight," an aide said. Besides rifle-toting Indian policemen and electronic security gates, the Nobel Peace laureate employs his

own armed guards. Bullet-proof cars are being considered for his travel down the mountain.

According to Gareth Sparham, a Canadian scholar, the dispute between the Shugden followers and the Tibetan government-in-exile is as much political as religious.

"Shugden is today a political symbol representing an emerging political party wedded to the idea that the final arbiters of Tibet's destiny should be monks, and that it should champion a fundamentalist version of Tibetan Buddhism as a state religion."

The Dalai Lama must reject Shugden, Dr Sparham said, "in order that

his exile government is fair and is seen to be fair amongst the Tibetan population at large."

An Indian travel agent who lives beside the School of Dialectics, where the murders took place, dismissed the various conspiracy theories as Chinese whispers.

"It's all about money. After all, this happened a few days after the director returned from Hong Kong."

Whether the crime was a burglary gone wrong, a politically motivated assassination, or the culmination of a religious feud which spans generations and incarnations, the mountain retreat of Dharamsala is grieving.



Dalai Lama: Caught up in a bitter doctrinal dispute

## Shooting heightens Korean tension

Richard Lloyd Parry

The Korean defector crisis took a dramatic twist over the weekend when a North Korean living near Seoul was shot, apparently by agents of his former government.

Police set up roadblocks after the attack on Lee Han Young, a relative of the North Korean leader. Kim Jong Il. The attack appeared to be in retaliation for the defection last



Victim: Lee Han Young, who was seriously wounded

week of Hwang Jang Yop, a senior North Korean politician, who is under police protection in the South Korean embassy in Peking.

Mr Lee was shot at close range by two men in the entrance of an apartment building on Saturday. Police said the gun used was a Belgian-made Browning, a standard weapon of North Korean agents. Neighbours who helped Mr Lee said

he muttered "Spy, spy" before losing consciousness. Surgeons failed to remove a bullet from his head and last night he was given little chance of surviving.

The South Korean cabinet met to discuss the incident and offered 50m won (£36,750) for information about the assailants. "North Korea has threatened to take hundred- and thousandfold revenge for the Hwang incident," said the Prime Minister, Lee Soo Sung. "This attack shows the threat is something concrete."

Mr Lee is the nephew of a former wife of Mr Kim, and escaped to South Korea in 1982. He had been under police protection and even had plastic surgery. The attempt on his life will raise anxiety in Seoul about the extent of North Korean infiltration. Since his own attempted defection last Wednesday, Mr Hwang, 73, a member of the North Korean Workers' Party central committee, is reported to have told South Korean interrogators that Pyongyang has 50,000 active spies in the South.

In Peking, groups of North Koreans continued to loiter outside the South Korean consulate building, where Mr Hwang was spending a fifth day. Pyongyang claims that he was kidnapped and one of its diplomats told reporters in Peking that "if the South uses force to move him to South Korea we will respond with force. We are determined to prevent them from taking him to the South."

Armed Chinese police laid spikes on the road in front of an



Alert: South Korean troops hunting the would-be assassins

Photograph: Reuters

## Singapore capitalises on surrender of 1942

Richard Lloyd Parry  
Singapore

Lieutenant-General Arthur Percival, General Officer Commanding (GOC), Malaya, leans over the bunker conference table and takes in the news. Singapore's reservoirs have fallen into the hands of the Japanese, his men are running out of food, morale is plummeting, and the enemy is drawing closer. "Are we to go down in history as the first British force this century to surrender, gentlemen?" he asks his generals. They reluctantly signify their assent. "Well, may God have mercy on all of us."

Percival looks queasy, not only because he is about to authorise the surrender of Singapore, the Gibraltar of the East, to the Imperial Army. For the GOC, like most of the people in this bunker, is made of rubber - a talking, moving, animatronic dummy.

The moment Churchill called "the largest capitulation in British history" has become entertainment. After two years' restoration, Percival's headquarters, known as the Battle Box, open this morning as a hit-tech heritage site. Virtual-reality goggles show scenes of life as it would have been on 15 February 1942. Singaporeans dressed as Tommies guide visitors around the snack bar and souvenir shop. The first tourists this morning will pay 8 Singapore dollars (£3.50) each. And, apart from its commercial possibilities, the Battle Box also has a decidedly political message.

At the official opening on Saturday, 55 years to the minute after Percival's fateful decision, Ong Chit Chung, a historian and MP, said: "The... sun set on the British Empire. We depended on the British to defend us... but they gave priority to the war in Europe."

Economically, Mr Rifkind had a good deal of evidence to back up his point. Britain is Singapore's fourth-largest foreign investor, and in the region as a whole it attracts more business than any other country in Europe. But, apart from balance-sheets, the British government has other, less easily definable ambitions: to maintain a political and even military influence in the region.

It is no coincidence that, weeks before Hong Kong's reversion, British forces will put on one of their biggest international parades, in the form of Ocean Wave, a naval deployment which will make a six-month swing through Asia.

But in these areas, far more than in trade, British ambitions are thrown into perspective by US hegemony. Nowhere is its position as the single remaining superpower more crucial and obvious than in the Asia-Pacific region: 100,000 troops, including the Seventh Fleet, are based in Asia.

Alongside such a force, Britain's military prowess is little more than a sideshow. And, for all its attempts to keep up a presence in Asia, few Asians seem to be interested. For over a year Britain has been discreetly pressing for membership of the Asean Regional Forum, a multi-lateral security conference, which includes Japan, the US, and China.

Understandably, British views appear a little irrelevant to some of these governments and, so far, the approach has been gently rebuffed.

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## arts



# Hidden gender

**Phil Johnson**  
Billy Tipton was a Fifties jazzman. Or so he led people to believe. And thereby hangs a play

**B**illy Tipton was an American jazz saxophonist and piano player who played swing with the big bands of the Thirties and Forties. Though he was a journeyman musician rather than a star soloist, he performed with one of the greatest of all the major bands led by the master trombonist Jack Teagarden. In the Fifties, when big bands could no longer support themselves, Tipton formed his own trio, travelling from his home in Spokane, Washington to play nightclub engagements throughout the West. For the next 30 years, as a jobbing musician taking whatever work was available, Tipton seemed a typical example of his breed. At least until January 1989, when, aged 74, he died of a stomach ulcer, and an extraordinary secret was revealed. Billy Tipton was a woman.

The news, delivered by the owner of the funeral home, came as something of a shock to his three adopted sons. "He'll always be dad," Tipton's son John Clark was reported as saying. "But I think he should have left something behind for us, something that would have explained the truth." Tipton's widow, Kitty Oakes, who had separated from him 10 years earlier, refused to talk about the mystery beyond saying: "He gave up everything. There were certain rules and regulations in those days if you were going to be a musician."

Tipton, born Wilhelmina rather than William, began his/her masquerade in the Thirties, as a means of furthering a musical career at a time when women were more acceptable as vocalists than instrumentalists. Even so, there were plenty of precedents for successful female jazz musicians: Lil Armstrong and Mary Lou Williams were incorporated into some of the best bands of the time; Teagarden's sister Norma appeared as a piano soloist with her brother's band, and there were all-female orchestras like the Sweethearts of Rhythm and Ira Rae Hutton's Melodears. Whatever, Tipton evidently strapped her breasts as well as her sax for the 50-odd years of her career. While it may not be entirely coincidental that her employer, Jack Teagarden, was a notorious lusher, Tipton somehow managed to live life on the road as a man, in a milieu where handmen would piss out of a coach window as a matter of course.

With the luxury of hindsight, the grainy newspaper photo of Tipton, posed in a publicity still with the trio, that appeared alongside the story of her death in *Time* magazine, now looks like nothing so much as a portrait of a female drag-artist with a JFK haircut and a cheesy grin. The group's drummer, Dick O'Neill, recalled at the time of Tipton's death that some listeners would joke that his employer's baby face and high singing voice seemed too feminine to belong to a man. "But I would almost fight anyone who said that," recalled O'Neill. "I never suspected a thing."

Though the example of Tipton appears to test the credulity of her fellow jazz musicians to the limit, it also has a bearing on the sexual politics of a genre where the freedom of the music is rarely matched by a corresponding fluidity in matters of sexual orientation. While a number of celebrated jazz musicians have been, and are, gay, coming out has always been a serious matter of breaking the macho code, and consequently a course of action very few have taken.

The Tipton case, which at the time attracted only a couple of columns in the *New York Times* and *Time* magazine ("He never went swimming with his three adopted sons" was *Time*'s take on the subject), remains perplexing, like a jazz version of the *Martin Guerre* myth with an added gender-bending twist. The son's call for explanation has also been heeded, albeit in a roundabout way. The film director Robert Altman has commissioned a script about the mystery, and *The Slow Drag*, an off-Broadway play based on Tipton's story by the writer Carson Kreitzer, receives its British premiere at Soho's Freedom Theatre this Thursday.



Billy Tipton plays: the girls on the album cover look longingly, but isn't there something ever so slightly strange about our Billy? © Sutcliffe News/Features; Photograph: Hugo Glendinning

For Kreitzer, the figure of Tipton is less a matter of specifics than of symbolism. "The play is inspired by him," she says, "but otherwise it's completely a work of fiction. The story fascinated me, but it's so easy to read something like that and make a judgement. He chose to die of a bleeding ulcer rather than reveal his gender, and the question for the play has to be how that could be the right answer."

In the play, Billy Tipton becomes Johnny Christmas, a kind of Everyman/Everywoman figure. "He dies for our sins," Kreitzer says, "believing that you can't be a woman and love a woman, or that you can't be a woman and play jazz." Kreitzer deliberately distanced herself from the details of the Tipton story, she says, in order to use it "as a lens to look at the story of boy meets girl. Sexuality has a lot to do with it, but it is a love story in the end."

To prepare for the part of Tipton/Christmas, the actress Nikki Slade has been spending time looking at old Hollywood movies. "I've been watching Cary

Grant and Humphrey Bogart in *The Big Sleep*, studying how to light a cigarette and how to stand," she says. "For the purposes of the play, the character bases his outer demeanour on the movies. It's very much about exteriors and struggling to contain the conflict of suppressing the woman within; there's a lot of pain inside, which is symbolised by the stomach ulcer, and which keeps leaking through, like the sense that he is really a woman, and how exhausting living that lie is."

At a rehearsal last week, the director Lisa Forrell explained that, for her, "the Tipton figure becomes a man for the love of the music; her belief in real love is a Hollywood belief. When her wife leaves her, it's because she is fulfilling all these male stereotypes to the exclusion of anything else. I truly believe that for many years Billy Tipton really believed this, living her own lie, like women who

have false pregnancies. She becomes a man who wants to fulfil the perfect American dream."

Meanwhile, the fragments of the real Billy Tipton story continue to resound within the history of jazz. Born in Oklahoma, she was brought up in Kansas City at exactly the same time as Charlie Parker. Perhaps Wilhelmina participated in the same after-hours cutting sessions that helped hone Parker's genius. Or did she feel disbarred because of the twin burdens of her race and her sex? When the secret she had kept for all those years finally exploded in the form of a stomach ulcer, the response seems, in retrospect, rather underwhelming. "Now I know why I couldn't get him to a doctor," her eldest adopted son said on her death. "He had so much to protect and I think he was just tired of keeping the secret." The cheesy JFK grin of the photo remains to mock us all.

*The Slow Drag* is at the Freedom Theatre, Weymouth Street, London W1 (0171-734 0122) to 15 March

## Whatever happened to the laughter?

I suppose that *Push Comes to Shove* must be Twyla Tharp's most popular work, although not her most subtle or inventive. Yoking together two contrasted musical animals (a rag by Joseph Lamb and the Bear Symphony of Haydn), it pokes fun at ballet while exuberantly exploiting its bravura possibilities. The success it enjoyed on its creation in 1976 was caused by the performance Tharp got from Mikhail Barishnikov in the central role: a superb classical dancer plunging unexpectedly, wholeheartedly and with entire success into the world of Americana. Unfortunately, Tetsumi Kumakawa, who takes that role in the Royal Ballet's new production of the work, is no Barishnikov, as classicist or clown.

Yes, he can do all the virtuoso steps; his pirouettes, in fact, are even more spectacular than the Russian star's were, although without his style or timing. But Barishnikov

### Dance Push Comes to Shove Royal Ballet, Covent Garden

made the easy-looking bits in between just as important, whereas Kumakawa cannot do that even if he tries. He gets a bit lost under the bowler hat that provides a running gag, although he handles neatly its repeated snatches and catchings. Kumakawa has other disadvantages, too. For one thing, he seems to have no feeling for jazz, so his attempts at jazzy movement are pathetically perfunctory; for another, if he has a sense of humour, he manages to stop it showing.

Actually, he is not alone in that: whatever happened to

the laughter that used to accompany this ballet? There were only occasional sniggers at Covent Garden on Thursday. Doreen Russell and Sarah Wildor look miscast in the other two lead roles: nice dancers, attractive young women, but without the irony that the more mature and sophisticated originators of the roles brought to the American Ballet Theatre production. All the ABT dancers used facial expression far more, even the supporting ensemble. Perhaps nobody thought to tell the Royal's *corps de ballet* that their sequences are meant to be a parody.

The dancer who comes nearest to the real spirit of the ballet is Deborah Bull, briefly featured in the second movement. But as a whole the work needs more wit, sharper timing, and bigger, more sardonic personalities. Sorry if that sounds like *lese-majesté*. Luckily, the principals all have vocif-

erous fans to cheer them on who, unless they watch the *Barishnikov* by Tharp video, will not know how much more of a treat they could be having. The premiere came last on a somewhat bedraggled triple bill; one of those curious Covent Garden evenings when the intervals are longer than the ballets. This was to allow time for assembling and dismantling the hugely cluttered building site that accommodates Kenneth MacMillan's *The Judas Tree*, a tale of friendly neighbourhood whoring, rape, murder and blasphemy. It is nasty and brutish, but not very short.

Before this came a revival of David Bintley's *Conson Lessons*, none too well danced except by Belinda Hadley and Jane Burn as the secondary soloists. For a ballet intended as an exercise in style and exactness, this is hardly good enough.

John Percival



Miscast: Doreen Russell in 'Push Comes to Shove' Photograph: Laurie Lewis

### Theatre Scouse Liverpool Everyman

Following the declaration of Liverpool as an independent republic, messages of support flood in from ETA, the Tamil Tigers, and Cilla Black. This joke in Andrew Cullen's *Scouse* encapsulates the play's appeal and its interest exactly: delight in the wit, but a growing unease at its juxtapositions.

Bathos is Cullen's favourite device to exploit the essential strain of Liverpoolian self-mockery. In the hilarious opening scene, the lead character, Tom, working as a tour guide ("it's better than walking the streets"), sees his party melt away from his account of the city's social history as they realise that this is neither the football nor The Beatles tour. As a vignette of Liverpool's present predicament of deprivation, a heroic past co-opted into a "heritage", and facile romanticism, as well as an introduction to Paul Broughton's magnificent Tom in all his bluster and dignity, this scene could scarcely be bettered.

The succeeding short scenes present a gallery of local

"types". The zaniest is Andrew Schofield as a flasher who gets his thrills listening to Tesco cashiers call "pricheck"; and the most familiar is Gynor Spearitt's Tina, the feisty tottie. The style is an interesting mix of community theatre steeped in social history, which flourished in the repertory theatre of 30 years ago, and contemporary TV and stand-up.

But as *Scouse* progresses, Cullen works steadily against the comic grain. While we are still willing the Liverpool Republic to further Ruritanian excesses, darker events take hold. Demonstrations turn to disturbance, riot police to paras and death squads; there are punishment beatings and shootings; bombings and then reprisals from the Manchester United Volunteer Force. By

now the bathos is not so funny. Tom and his family are increasingly involved in the disturbances, and such has been our sympathy for them, especially for the excellent Kate Fitzgerald as Tom's resolute wife, Kath, it looks as though Cullen is in danger of slithering down a treacherous slope of apologetics.

But as the ending makes powerfully clear, it is we who are in danger of losing our moral bearings as we struggle to square our empathy with Tom's family and their descent into terrorism. Such nice people... it couldn't happen here... tell us it isn't true. Cullen's play is an exaltation and a satire of contemporary Liverpool, angry on the city's behalf and angrier still at the consequences of introversion. It also re-ignites community theatre in Liverpool, a feel-good play that leaves you, feeling, well, not so good. Which is the best reason *Scouse* must enjoy the success its resounding first night promises.

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Jeffrey Wainwright

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### Opera Carmen WNO Cardiff New Theatre

For your committed opera director, *Carmen* has often seemed like red rag to a bull. What else is there to be said about it, darling? But Patrice Chéreau and Moshe Leiser mercifully avoid the *Carmen* stamman in their new Welsh National Opera production, which opened in Cardiff on Saturday. Though not without idiosyncrasy and a certain conscious theatricality, this is a memorable, text-based staging that gives us the work, not a clutter of post-modern attitudes to it.

All the same, one is conscious that particular decisions have been taken: the decision, for instance, to move the action out of its public arena - to privatise it, one might say. So Morales and friends discourse about non-existent passers-by; Carmen sings her gypsy song to an audience of two, without dancers; and in the last scene the chorus report (with brilliant vitality) on an invisible procession.

It's a *Carmen* of strong, static set-pieces, rather than the wide-angle and the zoom lens, and it's largely decontextualised: Christian Fenouillet's Seville is a few colour-washed front- and backdrops, some chairs and tables, and several bowls of oranges. Carmen herself, while she goes on about freedom and the call of the wild, is actually confined by civilised items like a chair or a table. José and Micaela duet looking away from each other and kiss embarrassedly, barely brushing cheeks. Carmen and Escamillo croon sentimentally in a pool of soft light in a sea of gloom on an otherwise empty stage.

The real strength of Chéreau-Leiser is in their meticulous direction of the singers, and it's a strength rewarded here by a very good cast, singing in at least passable French. Carmen herself, sung with fine poise and lovely dark tone by Sara Fulgoni, is kept life-size - one gypsy among several - which in no way belittles José's obsession, but makes it more personal. Alwyn Mello's Micaela is an object-lesson in the treatment of pale convention: delicately well sung, sensitive, precise and just sufficiently aware of the role's artificiality. Her aria delivered against the proscenium arch is a perfect idea, discreet and subtle.

Perhaps John Dazsak's wain, director's image, but the role comes to life in his singing, which is beautifully focused, stylish and controlled. If there's a weakness, it's Bruno Caproni's saturnine Escamillo - a curiously laborious, introspective *toreador*. But Heather

Lorimer and Annie Vaville are striking as Frasquita and Mercedes, and Simon Thorpe and Peter Hoare add real fair to the quintet.

The American conductor Robert Spano directs with crisp authority if not yet thorough command of pit-to-stage ensemble. The slowish tempi he sometimes prefers need sharper ensemble, and the quicker ones want simply to be tidier. But there is no mistaking his musical grasp, which he shares with the whole production.

At the New Theatre, Cardiff, 19, 24 Feb, 1, 7 Mar (01222 876889); Bristol Hippodrome, 11, 14 Mar (0121-622 7486); Birmingham Hippodrome, 18, 21 Mar (0121-622 7486); The Mayflower, Southampton, 25, 27 Mar (01703 711811); Apollo Theatre, Oxford, 1, 4 Apr (01865 244544); Empire Theatre, Liverpool, 8, 11 Apr (0151-709 1535); Grand Theatre, Swansea 15, 18 Apr (01792 475715)

Stephen Walsh

سكرا من الامم

# Roseanne Barr the lottery loser of all time

As poor white trash she was America's sweetheart, as rich white trash she ain't.

By Daniel Jeffreys

**R**oseanne Barr has lost her way, and maybe her marbles. At least that's how it seems in this woe-filled ninth year of *Roseanne*, a show that was once the best on American television.

The producer and star of *Roseanne* has already declared that this will be her last series. So far, the offerings in year nine are so bad that ABC Television may pull *Roseanne* in mid-season, an almost unthinkable *coup de grace* for a show that once occupied the top three of American television through four straight years.

The writers of *Roseanne*, by bowing to the whims of its titular star, have all but ruined the show, allowing Roseanne to win more than \$100m dollars in the lottery. Imagine the blue-collar Connors with more money than Rockefeller. This absurd dramatic device turned *Roseanne* inside out and removed its heart as well.

Instead of being a clever comedy about trying to be married, with children, on a limited budget, *Roseanne* has served up duff episodes where the show's star has dressed as Xena the warrior princess, and a centre-fold. Roseanne's woes are seen in the American press as a betrayal of those who stayed loyal to the show, no matter what its outrageous star did in her excessive overreactions to stardom.

It seems Roseanne Barr, now worth almost a billion dollars, has tired of realism and has turned self-indulgent instead. She is spending this season playing at dressing-up, glamorising her character, upping Roseanne's income and profile, pushing her closer to centre stage. In short, she is forcing the TV character of Roseanne to metamorphose into a close

approximation of the real Roseanne. With character Roseanne looking set to divorce Dan Connor, we can all look forward to an episode where Mrs Connor marries her new chauffeur in a champagne ceremony at the New York Plaza, only to reveal later that her second husband is a cross-dressing lesbian.

What's wrong with that is not the sexual politics, but the spectacle of a Hollywood star turned monomaniac, abusing a much-loved national treasure, her show, just because she can. It's Roseanne as the kid who builds his sandcastles so that she can knock them down.

Admittedly, life can get pretty strange when your job occasionally involves a \$70,000 shopping spree with Mike Tyson, especially if 18 years ago you were a trailer park mom with a hell-hop for a husband. It gets even more weird if, as Roseanne Barr believes, your mind contains at least 22 personalities, the consequence of sexual abuse by a father who behaved like a demon and forced you to leave home prematurely for pregnant life in a battered mobile home.

The puzzle is, why have these psychic forces imploded now? For most of her nine seasons as queen of US television, Roseanne has somehow managed to surmount her chaotic personal life. Roseanne the sitcom remained funny and inventive while the real-life Roseanne kept careening all over the place through her seemingly whacked out claims of child abuse, a lost-and-found daughter, and the allegedly homicidal tendencies of Tom Arnold. Against all these odds, she retained a finely tuned comic sensibility that kept her show from self-destruction. No more. Roseanne's evil genie is out of the bottle.

It's too bad. Roseanne rocked the TV landscape in a way that's still sending out aftershocks. "It's hard to remember how raw, how rude - how real - Roseanne seemed in the glitzy 1980s," says Preston Beckman, a senior executive at NBC television. "Since then, for better or worse, television has come around to Roseanne's view of the world."

"All the other serious sitcom actresses thank Roseanne for opening the door for them," says Dorothy Swanson, a New York theatrical agent. "Roseanne has taken a lot of hits, but she changed things for women in television."

Roseanne knows that she has been a revolutionary, thrusting her attitude right in timeslot's frequently smug face. "Hollywood is the pipe from hell," she said in November 1995. "The noxious gases come up and affect everyone. They're always trying to put me back in my place. The reason everyone is so scared of me is because I'm so normal. They're appalled at women who look like me, act like me, come from the class I come from, the fact that I'm Jewish. The people out here, they live to pose. I have the screaming kids. I'm always yelling at them. I'm a real mom. I'm not Hollywood."

Since Roseanne made those remarks her looks have changed, plastic surgery shaping her face and stomach into something closer to the Hollywood norm. Doing all that, it is hard to stay focused on a show that worked because it voiced the fears and frustrations of working-class Everywomen - and did so smartly, in the subversive context of situation comedy. Roseanne was a hit because it tapped into the audience's desire to see something other than the typical idealised,

upper middle-class television family. The show had parents who screamed and struggled with weight problems.

No one was better suited to this role than Roseanne Barr. She was born one of four kids into a poor Jewish family living among the Mormons in Salt Lake City. In 1968 her life was changed for ever when she was struck by a car and nearly died from internal bleeding. Thereafter Rosey, as her parents called her, seemed to spin out of control, experimenting with a hippie lifestyle and bearing an illegitimate daughter, called Brandi, whom she gave up for adoption. Roseanne also spent several months in a psychiatric hospital. Then came Bill Peatland, a hotel clerk. It was the early 1970s, and the couple lived in a Denver trailer park.

Her sister Geraldine was the force that drove Rosey up on stage. The two women became habitués of the feminist Woman to Woman bookshop and local comedy clubs where Roseanne's profane "domestic goddess" persona was shaped. They formed a 10-year plan that would carry Rosey's battered self to the Johnny Carson show, an HBO Special and *Roseanne*.

It worked, although not for Geraldine Barr. In 1992 she filed an unsuccessful \$70m breach of contract lawsuit against her big sister. The two have not spoken for years, and now Geraldine follows Rosey's turbulent life through the media. "I'm watching this woman I knew and love," she says. "And all of a sudden she gets her breasts cut off. Then she gets her nose cut off. This is really scary for me to see." Although not more frightening than Roseanne's sudden accusations of parental sex abuse, published out of the



blue three years ago, which portrayed Mr Barr as a man obsessed with menacing his daughter while biding his time for his own excrement.

Whilst Geraldine was leaving Roseanne's life, Tom Arnold, her second husband, was filling the void. The two met when both had problems with substance abuse, and the marriage

ended when Roseanne ran off with her driver/bodyguard while claiming that she thought Arnold was about to kill her.

Hollywood's failure to ostracise Arnold - in fact the reverse happened - has Roseanne especially steamed up. "This town can't hand Tom enough rewards, and they all know what he did," she said last

year. "I have 17 pictures of my body all bruised."

It seemed that with her third husband, the ex-driver/bodyguard Ben Thomas, Roseanne had found emotional peace. They had a long-fought-for child late last year (after miscarriage two embryos), a minor miracle considering that the star's tubes had been tied six years ago. The

baby is fine, but there are rumours, strong ones, that she and Thomas are finished.

Roseanne says that she has a condition called dissociative identity disorder which she describes as having a personality that's been "hit with a hammer and smashed, so all the emotions have been separated". The star, in therapy now for five years, says her personalities are so distinct that they have different signatures.

So here we have the most probable explanation of what has happened to *Roseanne*. The show was one of television's icons. There's a Roseanne who only wanted to be just that, the symbol of prime time TV. There's another Roseanne who hates all of that and says so. "Hollywood is the Night of the Living Death," she remarked last month. "Everyone's afraid here. They're afraid they can't keep what they've got. Everything's built on stilts, including the stilted egos. They're just a bunch of freaks. Even the parties are about work. Nobody has any fun here."

The result of the conflict between these two Roseannes? A decision to deconstruct one of the most successful sitcoms in history, to use the Connors' lottery win as a means to mock the show's own foundation and aspirations, to make it a parody of everything that Roseanne fears but also covets.

Roseanne Barr once said that the show has been her most effective form of therapy. On the evidence of this last and final season, it has entered the Gestalt phase. One can only imagine, as Roseanne's real life apparently lurches to another crisis, what the final episode will be like. Watching it may rank up there with stopping to gawk at fatal road accidents.

## I didn't kill her. Let me out, or I'll die in prison

Did 'Aunt Flo' walk to her own death? Her 67-year-old niece, convicted of murder, is due for a retrial. By Grania Langdon-Down

**T**hree and a half years ago Sheila Bowler was led from the dock to begin a life sentence for murder, and an education in the drugs and violence of prison life that her comfortable, middle-class world had not prepared her for.

Mrs Bowler, 67, still cannot believe that anyone could think her guilty of killing her late husband's elderly aunt. And she is convinced she will not survive until 2005, her earliest potential release date. "I have to get out," she says. "I will die if I have to stay in here. I could never take my own life but I will shiver up and die, or my mind will become distorted. I will not survive another eight and a half years in here."

The daughter of a solicitor, brought up as a strict Methodist, Sheila Bowler was a recently widowed, well-respected music teacher in Rye, East Sussex, when she was arrested in May 1992 and accused of pushing 89-year-old Florence Jackson into the river Brede.

In a mystery worthy of Agatha Christie, the wear and tear on a pair of slippers, an unprepared bed and a missing walking-stick and torch became sinister clues in the absence of any evidence as to how "Aunt Flo" came to be in the river.

It was about 8pm on 13 May 1992 when Mrs Bowler collected Aunt Flo from Greyfriars Residential Home in Winchelsea to take her home for the weekend. Driving down a hill, Mrs Bowler said she felt her steering fall. She stopped the car and found she had a partially flat tyre. As she had no spare wheel, she decided to call for a recovery service from a nearby house. When she returned to the car about 30 minutes later with the people from the house, Aunt Flo was nowhere to be seen. Mrs Bowler's immediate thought was that she could not have walked far. Thirteen hours later a police helicopter spot-

ted Aunt Flo's body lying in the water, 650 yards away from the car. The police appear to have fastened on to Mrs Bowler as a suspect fairly early on. Her abrasive manner and refusal to give way to emotion - which friends say hide a heart of gold - clearly antagonised those searching for answers.

A look at Aunt Flo's will provided a motive - to stop the £252 weekly cost of keeping her in a residential home haemorrhaging away the value of Aunt Flo's flat, which Mrs Bowler was due to inherit. But proving this case - that Mrs Bowler had driven her aunt to a pumping station beside the river Brede, where she pushed her into the water before driving back to the road and deflating her tyre - was more problematic.

There was no forensic evidence to link Mrs Bowler with the river bank or with the injuries her aunt had sustained. There were no tyre marks or footprints, and no blood or mud was found on Mrs Bowler's clothes. However, officers returning to Mrs Bowler's home found that there was no bed made up for Aunt Flo - either because she knew her aunt would not be coming back or because, as Mrs Bowler says testily, she did not know whether her aunt would manage to get up the stairs or would need a bed downstairs.

The walking-stick and torch that Mrs Bowler said were missing from the car were never found - because they were washed away by the river, or because they never existed?

The police did consider the possibility that Aunt Flo's death was an accident - they sent someone shuffling down the road in similar slippers to see whether anything could be proved from the wear and tear on the real slipper found on the riverbank - but they discovered nothing conclusive.

However, at Mrs Bowler's trial in July 1993, her defence team did not



Sheila Bowler (left, with her husband and daughter Jane), stood to gain nothing from the death of her husband's aunt Florence Jackson (above, in 1983)

seek to argue that Aunt Flo's death was accidental. Instead, they set about demolishing the prosecution case with great effect, arguing midway through the trial that there was no case to answer. In the absence of the jury, the trial judge, Mr Justice Garland, agreed that every plank of direct evidence against Mrs Bowler had collapsed. But, in a crucial decision, he ruled that the jury was still entitled to ask: "If not the defendant, then who?"

Since there was no evidence of anyone else's involvement, and since it was widely accepted that Aunt Flo could not have made the fatal journey by herself, the jury came to the understandable conclusion that Mrs

Bowler must have been guilty.

After the trial, her friends and family, including her son Simon, 30, and daughter Jane, 27, were desperate. They dismissed the so-called motive for murder as senseless. At the trial, Aunt Flo's flat in Rye had been said to be worth £30,000. But it was dark and dingy, and sold recently at auction for only £18,000. Mrs Bowler, on the other hand, was comfortably off. The mortgage on her £150,000 family home had been paid off 12 years earlier. She had an income of about £17,000 a year, including a teaching salary and pension, and she had about £15,000 in investments.

The one glimmer of hope is that

her case, which is now being considered by the Home Office minister Timothy Kirkhope, will be referred back to the Court of Appeal, even if it means facing a retrial. Her case could be one of the last to be decided before responsibility for investigating alleged miscarriages is handed over to the new Criminal Cases Review Commission on 31 March.

For the former journalist Tim Devlin, who is leading the campaign for Mrs Bowler's case to be reconsidered, the clinching reason for his belief in her innocence was the timing of Aunt Flo's death. "Sheila cared passionately about her daughter Jane's musical career," he says.

"It is inconceivable that she would have committed such a cruel and callous murder on the eve of Jane's final music degree examination."

But gut feelings are not enough to persuade the Court of Appeal to overturn a verdict: there must be fresh evidence, or the trial judge must have erred in law when summing up the case.

The Channel 4 series *Trial and Error* became interested in Mrs Bowler's case and ran the first of two programmes on it in September 1994. It came up with what seemed the obvious answer - that Aunt Flo, like many occupants of old people's homes, was much more mobile than had been imagined. She was also on

diuretics and was terrified of being left alone - cause enough to make her struggle out of the car and shuffle along the road to her death.

But, in May 1995, the Court of Appeal decided that the expert geriatrics evidence put before them was theoretical and they preferred the evidence of the people looking after her - and of Mrs Bowler herself - that Aunt Flo could not have walked any distance on her own.

However, her barrister David Martin-Sperry said there was no evidence that her carers were medically qualified, while Mrs Bowler's insistence that her aunt could not have walked far should have been considered from a psychological viewpoint and not taken as her instructions on the issue. "When she said, on finding out her aunt was dead, 'she couldn't have walked', it was wishful thinking. Mrs Bowler did not want her to have walked, which would have meant living with the responsibility of not having looked after her properly. Furthermore, by saying that, she was cutting off her sole line of escape. That is not the behaviour of a guilty defendant."

Meanwhile, Mrs Bowler's legal team has been working on new lines of medical evidence to support the theory that Aunt Flo's death was an accident, as well as gathering more expert geriatrics evidence backed by case histories highlighting the often upsurging mobility of elderly people.

For Mrs Bowler, focusing on the problems of her fellow inmates in Holloway is her way of keeping a grip on her own fears. Her health has suffered. She had a slight stroke last year while being held in Bullwood Jail in Essex. "If I get out, there may be people who will still believe I was responsible for her death and will shun me, but I will just ignore them," she says. "Jane said I should not go back to Rye, with all the gossip, but it is still my home."

# Expand Nato and pull Russia in from the cold

The "most powerful woman in the world" arrives in London tomorrow to shake John Major's hand before heading to Moscow. Last time Maria Jana Korbel was here she was an eight-year-old girl, a refugee from Nazi-occupied Prague. Now she is called Madeleine Albright, and she is the first woman US Secretary of State. After making a rapid recovery from the shock of discovering two weeks ago that her family was Jewish rather than Roman Catholic, she is on an inaugural whirlwind tour of her bailiwick - the world.

The most important issue she faces is tension between Nato and Russia. This is a greater immediate threat to global security even than the long-term issues of water shortage, population growth and global warming. Whatever its troubles, Russia is still a nuclear-armed power which is heir to 85 per cent of the military strength of the Soviet Union and still dominates the Eurasian landmass. Nato is planning to enlarge to the east. This upsets the Russians.

The United States, with Britain in tow, wants Nato to embrace the new democracies of central Europe. Mrs Albright is the personification of the forces operating on American politics. One of the candidate members is her homeland, the Czech republic. The other likely candidates, Hungary and

Poland, also have powerful advocates among the immigrant communities of America. So Mrs Albright wants the next Nato summit in July to issue formal invitations to these three countries to join the 16-nation North Atlantic alliance. If that happens, they are expected to become members on or before 4 April 1999, Nato's 50th anniversary.

Russia does not like it. Jacques Chirac, who talks to Mrs Albright today, urges caution. So is Nato enlargement a good idea? Before we answer that question, we have to ask a more basic one: What is Nato for? Nato is a military alliance and a highly successful one - it won the cold war. When the Soviet Union broke up, so did the Warsaw Pact alliance, Russia's *cordon sanitaire*. There would have been a certain logic in Nato disappearing as well. But instead, former members of the Warsaw Pact wanted to join Nato and Nato agreed that they should.

The motives on both sides were obvious. The central Europeans saw Nato membership as another credit card that free capitalist democracies carried in their wallets. They really want to join the European Union, but that is more complicated and will take longer. Admission to Nato is seen as a first step. Nato itself, meanwhile, was an institution in search of a role. And there is some evidence that,

since the end of the cold war, it could serve a purpose. It has a formal role in Bosnia, and even though the Gulf war was outside its area, Nato membership meant America's allies talked the same language and used compatible equipment and procedures.

But, equally, the Russians have good reason to regard Nato expansion as a threat. The war of words became heated last week when Russian officials reiterated Moscow's 1993 Military Doctrine, that it might use nuclear weapons in response to a conventional attack.

So, is the rush towards Nato's

expansion premature? The first thing to be said is that there are real obstacles in the way, even if the US thinks it can use its diplomatic muscle to push them aside. Nato enlargement has to be ratified by the legislature of all 16 Nato members, including two-thirds of the US Senate. Turkey has already threatened to refuse to ratify new members' accession if its ambitions to join the European Union are frustrated, as they will continue to be.

There are important questions about whether the Czech, Polish and Hungarian armed forces are ready to be integrated into Nato systems.

But Nato enlargement is not just about matters military. The candidate members know that. And the US sees it that way, too. A senior US diplomat earlier this month said he saw Nato enlargement as a "second hit at the apple", in trying to complete the 1947 Marshall Plan, extending post-war reconstruction to the countries frozen out by Stalin.

However, the Prime Minister should warn Mrs Albright that this laudable aim should not be pursued to the extent of freezing Russia out. If Nato does have a role in the post-cold-war world, it should be to help co-ordinate responses to all threats to the rule of international law. If that is the aim, then present plans for expansion are potentially dangerous because they are too modest, in that they do not include Russia and other nuclear powers.

The argument against more ambitious expansion is that it would weaken it by making Nato too diffuse. But Nato was always diffuse. Its guarantee spanned the Atlantic, linking North America and Europe and the promise that an attack on one would be regarded as an attack on all applied to all members, including Belgium and Iceland. It always had members who were militarily weaker than others - notably Greece and Turkey. But their membership was important for political and strategic

reasons. The principle of common security bound the members together. On that basis, Nato enlargement should go ahead. But - and the but is becoming bigger - it must be accompanied by a firm agreement which pulls Russia in from the cold and binds it firmly into the European security system.

## Mobile menace to society

That Norman Lamont had the right idea. He just didn't go far enough. Instead of putting a tax on mobile phones, he should have banned the things altogether. Some aerials for them are apparently being disguised as giant plastic trees in rural areas. And today we report that masts are being installed on school roofs at £4,000 a throw - a bizarre way to attract private sector funding into the education system. A teachers' union doesn't like them because they use invisible rays and their members have to let in jobsworths in overalls to service them. We don't like them because they make it easier for people to pollute public places with private conversations. "Hello? I'm on the train. I'm going to be five minutes late..."

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Liberty and illusion in the war on drugs

Sir: Two correspondents (letters, 15 February) present respectable and valid arguments for an alternative approach to the "war on drugs". Surely the most important point to be considered is individual freedom.

As John Stuart Mill put it in his seminal work *On Liberty*, first published in 1859: "The only purpose for which power can be rightly exercised over any member of a civilised community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral, is not a sufficient warrant... Over himself, over his own body and mind, the individual is sovereign."

In the National Drugs Campaign Survey commissioned by the Health Education Authority in 1995-1996, 45 per cent of all those questioned said that they had taken at least one of the listed drugs, and 54 per cent of 20-22-year-olds said they had taken cannabis at some time. Just how many people need to break a law before it is repealed? ROBIN PRIOR, Burnham, Buckinghamshire

Sir: Your review of the report *Tackling Local Drug Markets* ("Trainspotting: the reality", 13 February) highlighted the wide availability of drugs on the streets of London, including methadone.

Methadone has come to be regarded as a cheap and easy option in working with drug users. In parts of London and other areas it is now far easier to get a methadone prescription than access to drug-free treatment.

Deaths from methadone overdose now outnumber those from heroin, and a few agencies are seeing increasing numbers of clients who have become addicted to methadone purchased on the illegal drugs scene.

Methadone is a palliative measure which does not address the real issues behind the drug use. While accepting that methadone has a role to play, more emphasis must be placed upon the ultimate goal of treatment, which is to motivate and encourage drug users to become abstinent.

PETER MARTIN, *Chief Executive, apa Community Drug & Alcohol Initiatives, London EC1*

Sir: We have a duty to the children of our country not to encourage escapism (letters, 15 February). The real abilities to deal with life's problems and insecurity come from within ourselves, from our own ability to live in reality, to face our problems.

If there is a "high" to be had, it will be one of our own making in the feeling of self-esteem that we will have and the happiness and contentment from learning about integrity, social skills, and living life fully aware, with feelings and emotions real - not the drug-induced, worthless illusion that we are something we are not. STEPHEN GILHOOLEY, London SE27

### Self-fulfilling

Sir: If you ask those who've paid an admission charge if they were deterred by having to pay an admission charge ("Museum finds that money is no object", 14 February), what answer should you expect? ROGER HOUGHTON, Bath, Somerset



### Major mixed up about history

Sir: If the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom really thinks that resurrecting the Scottish Parliament will "destroy a thousand years of British history" ("Major launches crusade to save constitution", 15 February), should not his Scottish Secretary remind him that there has been a British Parliament only since 1707, and that 290 years is a significantly shorter period than the 410 or more years for which the separate Scottish Parliament had previously existed?

And as far as England is concerned, our last thousand years started with this country about to become successively part of a Scandinavian empire and of Norman and Angevin empires - and more recently we shared Henry VI with France, William III with the Netherlands, and George I, II, III, and IV with Hanover. ERIC THOMPSON, London NW2

Sir: The West Lothian question is certainly a problem to be addressed by pro-devolutionists (letters, 14 February). However, it only becomes an insuperable stumbling-block to those determined to make it so.

There are several examples abroad of democracies giving a special degree of autonomy to regions whose representatives in the national parliament are not restricted as to their voting rights: Denmark (Greenland and the Faeroes); Finland (the Åland Islands); Spain (Catalonia and the Basque region); Italy (Sardinia, Sicily, Trentino-Alto Adige); not to mention the United Kingdom (the

old Stormont parliament). If the granting of autonomy to the Scots and Welsh is indeed felt to be unjust by the English, there are ways of addressing this - principally by allowing England as one or several regions to opt for the same autonomy as is granted to Scotland. STEPHEN GILHOOLEY, Solihull, West Midlands

### King Zog a great force for good

Sir: Andrew Gumbel ("Legacy of conflict and misrule", 14 February), in describing King Zog of Albania as "a power-hungry autocrat", does this remarkable man a grave injustice.

Under his rule, first as prime minister, then as president and later as king, Albania's agriculture flourished, the oil and mining industries were developed, ports, roads, bridges and electricity installations were constructed, a gendarmerie was trained by British officers, and compulsory education introduced for girls as well as boys - an innovation in a Muslim country.

The late Lord Amery described Zog as "the most impressive man I ever met". By failing to help Zog regain his throne after the Second World War, the Western powers permitted the Stalinist Enver Hoxha to plunge Albania back into the poverty from which Zog had done so much to rescue it. DONALD FOREMAN, *Secretary-General, The Monarchist League, London WC1*

### Scientists must answer for BSE

Sir: Nicholas Schoon asks "Who deserves blame for BSE?" (14 February) and answers by commenting correctly that six agriculture ministers did too little and too late.

But the Ministry of Agriculture (Maff) scientists who advise the politicians are also to blame. The macabre and unhygienic feeding of dead sheep to our cattle began after the last war. Many of the sheep were, of course, infected with scrapie and as their brains - the infective tissue - were still *in situ* the then government vets insisted that the agri-food industry follow strict guidelines designed to protect cattle from this almost indestructible organism.

These guidelines included the use of fat-solvents in the recycling process: the mammalian brain is very fatty and this manoeuvre ensured that brain tissue, complete with the infective organism, did not get into the cattle feed.

However, in 1981 it was decided, in the name of deregulation, that the agri-food industry should no longer be shackled by guidelines and so they were relaxed. The Maff scientists, who presumably knew all about the scrapie agent, failed to intervene. In 1985 the first cow went down with BSE and by the end of 1986 Maff knew that six cows on three farms had died of it. They did not then ban the feed (why not?): on the contrary, farmers all over the UK were

encouraged to buy these new high-protein rations.

And the Maff politicians instructed their own vets that they would face dismissal if they published their interesting scientific papers on the subject or went around talking about a scrapie-like illness now in cattle. H C GRANT, London NW3

The author is a neuropathologist

Sir: You are quite right to point out that intensive farming methods are threatening both our environment and our health (leading article, 14 February).

The world's livestock herds are accelerating erosion and desertification as vast areas of forest are cleared and used for grazing cattle. In the United States alone, 85 per cent of topsoil loss is attributed to livestock ranching.

In addition an average 25 gallons of water are needed to produce a pound of wheat, but 2,500 gallons of water are needed to produce a pound of meat. As your newspaper recently pointed out, there is a world shortage of water.

An acre of cereal can produce five times more protein than an acre devoted to meat production; and legumes (beans, lentils, peas) can produce 10 times as much. Thus the greater the human consumption of animal products, the fewer people can be fed.

Intensive farming is bad for humans, bad for the environment and bad for animals. J LINDLEY, Birmingham

### Plenty of cod in other waters

Sir: Following your report (6 February) on the threat to cod stocks in the North Sea, I felt it important, on behalf of the UK fish processing industry, to point out that Britain does not face an imminent cod shortage.

Current scientific evidence does suggest that there is cause for concern about North Sea fish stocks - and it seems that some tough decisions will need to be made about reduction of fishing effort in order to maintain a thriving British fishery for the future.

However, consumers should not be misled into believing that this news means the imminent collapse of cod supply to the British market.

Britain consumes 25 per cent of the entire world cod catch but only 5 per cent of the total is sourced from the endangered North Sea fishery. The majority comes from well-managed, sustainable fisheries such as the Baltic and Barents Sea, where quotas are actually being increased.

We would do much to safeguard our own fishing industry by learning some of the lessons taught by these fisheries.

ANDREW THOMAS, *Chief Executive, Booker Fish Division, Grimsby, Humberside*

■ A letter on defence policy by Cooor O'Neill, of London SW14, published on 12 February, was mistakenly attributed to Ken O'Neill, his father, from whose fax machine it was sent.

### Fond memories of a latchkey kid

Sir: I must be one of the oldest surviving "latchkey kids" ("Working lives bring back the latchkey kids", 12 February).

In 1924, for economic reasons, my mother went back to work. She was one of only about 9 per cent of married women who did paid work outside the home at that time. At the age of 10, not only was I responsible for the latchkey, which I carried in a purse slung over my shoulder along with my dinner money, I was also in charge of my younger sister and two other younger children on our mile-long walk to school (no school buses then).

My mother left the house before we did. Sometimes my father, whose work was irregular, was able to see us off, but often I was responsible for seeing that the front door was securely latched.

We were able to get a bus home from school and arrived home at about 4.30pm to an empty house. It was my job, as the elder, to light the gaslight (no electricity then) and the fire (laid by my father before his departure in the morning).

It was then our job to lay the table for tea. We took pride in doing this correctly. There was no sliced bread in those days and I was not allowed to cut the loaf, so that task had to await my mother's return at about 5.15pm. We filled in the short time before her arrival by reading comics (*Tiger Tim* or *The Children's Newspaper*) or starting our homework (no television or even radio to entertain us). When my mother arrived we had a light tea, helped her with the washing-up and then finished our homework while she prepared our evening meal. We had a family supper when my father came home.

This routine continued until my father obtained permanent work abroad and we accompanied him. My mother enjoyed working so she continued to work until retirement age, but was able to afford help in the home.

All is not doom and gloom for latchkey kids. The home atmosphere is what matters. Ours was a cheerful home and we all mucked in when necessary. I do not think we suffered from our experiences. My sister and I received a better education than would have been possible had my mother not worked, and are glad that she did so.

AUDREY HUNT, Woodford Green, Essex

### No knots for us

Sir: So children will be assessed on whether they can tie their shoe-laces when they start school (report, 12 February)? What nonsense. Four- and five-year-olds have wonderful shoes which depend on Velcro and buckles these days. I have no intention of teaching my son to do laces until he is six, when he will pick it up very quickly.

DINAH ROBERTSON, Lymington, Hampshire

### Doppelgänger?

Sir: John Walsh states (February 15) that Isabelle Huppert has never appeared on the stage of the National Theatre. Last year I played there in *Mary Stuart*, which starred a woman doing a quite astonishingly convincing impersonation of her. I wonder who it can have been. CHRISTOPHER CAMPBELL, London N16

Post letters to *Letters to the Editor*, and include a daytime telephone number. Fax: 0171-293 2056; e-mail: [letters@independent.co.uk](mailto:letters@independent.co.uk). E-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

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## Now art thieves aren't Raffles but riff-raff

Criminals who specialise in national treasures are likely to be common gangsters who have done their homework, says Jojo Moyes

In Hitchcock's 1955 classic, *To Catch a Thief*, Cary Grant plays the romantic role of the art burglar, that sophisticated among criminals whom even Grace Kelly cannot resist. Yet apart from a handful of recent cases, including one where the stolen goods were recovered from a string of exclusive addresses, the days of the Raffles-type thief seem largely to be over.

Because according to experts, in the modern world of art crime, you are more likely to be talking of characters such as the Dublin criminal Martin "The General" Cahill, or the purported UVF member "Half Track Mullan" than of aristocratic gentlemen thieves.

There are two common myths surrounding the art thief, says Charles Hill, former head of Scotland Yard's arts and antiques squad - that he is aristocratic, and that he is stealing to order for a "Dr No" figure, complete with secret hoard of priceless objects d'art. "They're not Raffles-type climbers with a box of chocolates. They're social climbing crooks. They're commodities criminals, whether it's drugs, securities or works of art. They start by stealing cars as teenagers, and then embark on their criminal career path."

He cites the example of Cahill, who graduated from domestic burglaries and stealing hire plant equipment, working towards his aim of becoming a major drug distributor. In May 1986 he organised a burglary at the home of Lord and Lady Beit, whose private art collection is considered to be one of the greatest of the 20th century. The paintings were to raise money for the drugs venture.

Cahill, who is described by Hill as "unsophisticated but cunning and persistent", used one of the paintings as collateral in a bank in Luxembourg. In 1993 he sent another to Istanbul in the care of a one-legged Scotsman known as Half Track Mullan, who was subsequently arrested attempting to swap it for heroin. Cahill was later shot dead by the IRA.

In this booming art theft industry, according to Hill, it is men like Cahill who are now the rule, rather than the exception. "Within their network the guy that steals the most valuable pictures is much more highly regarded than those who steal hub-caps. That's the pecking order of the criminal mind," Mr Hill says. "They do boast of what they've done to each other. It puts you above the guy who steals the JCB. It's straightforward one-upmanship out of Stephen Potter."

This is reiterated by Peter Scott, who was once known as "the human fly" as a result of his spectacular career as a cat burglar, during which he stole an estimated £30m worth of paintings and jewellery. Mr Scott, a former public schoolboy who has stolen from, among others, Lauren Bacall, John Aspinall and Elizabeth Taylor, considers himself far removed from the perpetrators of petty or violent crime.

"I always had my own particular standards. I could have stolen from the very rich ... but I couldn't be too happy on acts of violence or stealing property from people who couldn't afford it," he says. Stealing art, he feels, was different. It was a vocation that required intricate planning and knowledge. "I had a lot of passion for what I did. It was more important than anything, even more than my wives. It was the ultimate orgasm," says Mr Scott, who now works as a tennis coach.

He would watch four or five country houses, as well as a couple of town houses, at any one time. He also swopped up. "I know a bit about art. You do your research and eventually you know who has what. I would only really steal paintings when they were wanted by someone. Some paintings are a bit like currency. Hunting pictures and horse pictures by people like Stubbs or Ferneley are very popular. In fact, he said, they were so desirable to some members of the criminal fra-

ternity that they would "take a chance" and hang their plunder on their own walls.

"I had a pal that did an armed robbery many years ago from a country house in Bristol. He put one of these paintings up on his wall. Twelve years later he had guests round to dinner that recognised it. He got seven years."

Mr Scott, who subsequently wrote a book about his experiences, was as famous during the Fifties for his social exploits as for his criminal ones. "The fact that I was a rampant cat burglar did attract some silly upper-class girls," he concedes. But he says he was never the Raffles character the newspapers of the time made him out to be. "I was in Groucho's last night with John McVicar and I said to him, you can start believing your own bullshit."

Mr Scott believes he may have been the last of a dying breed. "Not many people are prepared to go into a country house on their own," he says. It's all gangs now. Substances have become the easier way for young people to get rich.

The world of the gentleman thief has passed, he says, because of the increasing sophistication of security devices. "You can't really climb about on roofs and ledges today because of the cameras. You look at houses in The Boltons, Grosvenor Square, they're all camera'd up."

However, according to Colin Norville-Read of *Trace* magazine, a register of stolen art and antiquities, the new breed of art thief is matching those devices for ingenuity. The gentleman player is being replaced by the professional. He may not know about art, but he is well aware of the market and the "business opportunities" within it.

"The level of planning always surprises us. They go in there with little slide rules stuck up their sleeves. One chap went into a country house museum with a walking stick with notches in the side marking the centimetres, so he could note exactly where the

infrared sensors were. We've even had people who wear socks which have stripes on for monitoring infrared sensors."

The new breed of thief, he says, is more business oriented. "You might have people stealing to order. For instance the big business this year was garden statuary ... 17th-century urns, fountains - some of them are worth as much as £10,000. Country house museums are now so tight with CCTV security that if [thieves] wanted to make money they had to adapt, to move location. So now they come into the garden with cranes."

In one recent unpublished case, a museum that had installed £300,000-worth of American infrared security equipment suffered a burglary after the thief shinned up a 50ft drainpipe covered with razor-wire. He simply wore kneecaps, assuming, correctly, that no one would think to safeguard that window. "It's a terrible thing to say, but if someone really wants a particular piece there's not a lot you can do," says Mr Norville-Read.

The audacity of art thieves is still something that raises them a couple of notches above the procurer of drugs or stealer of hub-caps. Mr Norville-Read tells of one incident where a thief had walked around a stately home as a tourist and selected a picture with a large gilt frame of something like a Gainsborough woman with a horse. The thief later returned and stole it, substituting a cheap poster copy of a woman and horse within a cheap gilt frame. Nobody noticed for several weeks.

"Bond Street is full of crooks," says Peter Scott. "It's littered with them." His tone is vaguely disapproving. Still, as with the best criminal logic, what goes around comes around, as he himself discovered last week. "Someone just stole the hub-caps from my Ford Ghia," he says. "I hope he's enjoying them."



## Britain booms as the health service ails

by Polly Toynbee

Boom! There it goes, up, up and away, a great gossamer diaphanous balloon full of hot air. Feeling good? Never had it so good, or at least not since 1986. Oh, happy days are here again.

So how does it feel to be plumb in the middle of the boom? Can you sniff it in the air? Does it smell of Givency and Jean-Paul Gaultier? Hear the music of cash registers, the zip of credit cards whisking through the slots. Does it tingle like Issey Miyake pleats over the skin? Or slide down the throat like a filament of roasted red pepper with goats' cheese, ciabatta and rocket?

You want to fly to Egypt over Easter? Forget it. Egypt is full. Watch the star-studded openings of shimmering chic restaurants, see the queues for tables spill out on to the pavements from Clapham High Street to Camden Town. MF's grumble that you can't get a decent table near Westminster for love or lots of money. (Boom talk is London talk.)

No, no, says the Chancellor. What boom? Only sustained and sustainable steady growth. It will last for ever! This time is different. Yet, from the bounce in his Hush Puppies, there is boom in the Chancellor's every step. The only difference this time is that no one thanks him for it - it's the feel-good-no-thanks-to-you boom. When will the balloon come down? Just before the next election.

Dear children, you who are too young to remember a decade ago, a word or two of warning. We have been here before - it does not last. Our mediocre growth rate has been static at less than 2.5 per cent since 1980. Even out the little booms and busts, that's what you get. As over, the politicians eagerly mistake a cyclical upturn for permanent bliss - growth at 4 to 5 per cent from now on. But what goes up must come down.

The South-east housing market is puffing fit to burst. Knight

Frank says that demand so far exceeds supply in the home counties that properties don't even reach their notice-boards; they are sold within hours. No more negative equity by the end of this year: we have lift-off, (except for those wretches already repossessed). Manor-houses, waterside, top of the range, there aren't enough country houses to go round. A three-bedroom country house at £350,000 last week drew so many enquiries that the vendors demanded best-and-final offers in sealed bids and got an extra £15,000. "We haven't had

sealed bids in years," say the agents. Savills tell their buyers these prices will rise by 50 per cent by the millennium.

Ian Christie, of the Henley Centre for Forecasting, says none of the overall figures tell the story. "Averages are meaningless. This is the winner-takes-all economy. Consumer confidence? Everyone knows it's a risk economy now, it's just a matter of 'how lucky do you feel?'" Even the winners fear becoming the next downturn's losers.

"Cool Britannia" said *Time* magazine's cover, extolling the triumph of booming Brit culture - the Sixties all over again: from Beatles, Bridget Riley and Carnaby Street read Oasis, Damien Hirst and Galliano. This issue of *Vanity Fair's* front cover has joined the stampede. Booming, they say. It's money from the Lottery flowing into the arts, it's the Eurostar train, the relaxation of archaic licensing laws, London, nerve centre of pop, clothes, movie-making and gastronomy. Even Tony Blair is cool. (What?)

I sit on the Northern Line reading all this, frankly embar-

assed to be seen reading it as bored passengers glare over my shoulder. We are stuck for 35 minutes in the tunnel, then slowly, slowly we inch past filthy, peeling stations, tempers fraying, pulses racing. Cool, huh? I can see Oval station might make a hip backdrop for a sultry anorexic modelling a Vivienne Westwood, or maybe the Spice Girls could strut their scrawny little belly-buttons on the grungy Kennington platform. Cool.

What is the story? The same old story as last time. More private squandering, more public

the need for public services on which we all depend: safe streets, hospitals that work, good schools that don't turn out hordes of unemployed yobs, public transport that runs reliably, public places that raise the spirits. This is not socialism, egalitarianism or the politics of envy, but desire for a decent quality of life that no amount of private, untaxed money can purchase. But "we" cannot afford it - munch, munch.

So what is affordability? Take the NHS, for it gets the most unequivocal universal support. In the Wirral, concern about

has signed his name in blood to plans for such minuscule growth that it faces calamity never before witnessed: by 1999 the NHS will be £5bn short. If it is allowed to fall so far behind, it will never catch up because by then to get back to where the NHS is now would take a hike of 3p on income tax, which no chancellor will ever sanction. The "we" who couldn't afford it will find ourselves paying a lot more for private health insurance to cover the shortfall.

Raising the alarm in a recent brilliant *Analysis* programme on Radio 4, Andrew Dilnot of the Institute of Fiscal Studies reminds us that how much we spend on the NHS is a matter of choice, not an economic law. Affordability is in the eye of the voter. But who will alert the voter that both parties are knowingly signed up to an NHS-killing budget?

Remember Gordon Brown's words: "I've an iron commitment to stability in public finances ... our programme requires no new spending ... and I can confirm also that we will be making no new commitments in our manifesto which require additional spending." Let us pray that he is lying through his teeth. In the meantime, boomers, enjoy!

## A word of warning, children. We have been here before. It does not last

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## Arthritis can affect any age...



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Rheumatic diseases can affect women of any age. There are over 6 million female sufferers in Britain today with diseases from juvenile Chronic Arthritis through to Osteoporosis.

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Research - finding the cure

REMEMBER ARTHRITIS RESPECTS NOBODY

## These guilty names shall not escape...

I have in my hand a list of the names of the guilty men. I am prepared to publish that list. Yes, I have in my hand a list of the names of the men who have done the deed. The deed which has horrified the whole of Britain.

What deed? I will tell you what deed. The deed which, day in, day out, has revolted the people of this good country.

I am talking about the brutal way in which Britain has been sold off, cheap, carved up for a quick profit, cheapened in the international market, and brought low in the eyes of our neighbours.

The way in which our own country has been ripped off, its gas and its water, its oil and its railways all flogged by a group of pet-rich quick flash Harries who shouldn't be allowed to run a PTA school jumble sale for fear they would sell off the school and its grounds. In other words, I am talking about from an honourable country into a society with about as much sense of honour as a conference of sales managers.

You know who I am talking about. I am talking about the people who were condemned in the Scott Report as having consistently lied to Parliament, all of whom refused to resign or even admit any guilt.

I am talking about the people who sold off our railways cheap for a quick buck and have left them to rot.

I am talking about the people who have let our roads choke with traffic and our air fill with pollution.

I am talking in very short sentences so that you understand what I am saying. So that I don't have to do a lot of nudging and winking.

Unlike Sir Richard Scott, who made the mistake of using lots of long sentences and gentlemanly circumlocutions in his report, so that the people he accused could say, "Well, he never actually said that I lied."

So that now Sir Richard Scott goes to bed weeping every night, saying, "Oh God, I thought I had written a damning report and nobody sees it that way! If only I had spelt out what I thought instead of doing the usual English thing



Miles Kingston

of hinting delicately at the facts." This is not a mistake I intend to make today.

I have the names of the guilty people, and I am not afraid to name them.

When a person lies, I say that he lies; I do not say, like Sir Richard Scott, that "he might have done better to adhere more pedantically to the facts as he knew them."

I have the names of the liars, the cheats, the fraudsters who have brought this country low down the European league and made us a laughing-stock.

I have the names of the people whose lying inefficiency inflicted BSE on this country.

The names of those who refused to testify to Brussels about BSE.

I have the names of those who pretended to be tough on crime, and let crime increase.

Who pretended to put more people in prison, and let more escape.

Who said they would preserve our town centres and let them die. (For heaven's sake get to the point! Ed)

The people I am talking about are the Tory government and their unelected quangos and their obedient chairmen and their lickspittle local bureaucrats and their time-serving hangers-on, and the men who ask questions for money, and the ...

[I am very afraid that you may lose the attention of your audience if you do not name some names soon. Ed]

They may sue me if they wish. The men who have made Britain a byword for sleaze and cheap profit in the last decade and a half may sue me all they like. I wish they would. I dare them to.

From 10 Downing Street on downwards, I challenge the mediocrities, the half-chancers, the opportunists, the small-time fraudsters to take me to court. They know they are guilty, so they will not dare.

And I challenge the people who put them there to take me to court! Yes, the people who in 1992 voted for this tawdry government, the Sun-reading, burger-eating, soap-watching mass public who put these guilty men in power, the voters who connived to hand the keys of the family silver to the petty crooks - I challenge them to say they are not accomplices to this horrifying and sordid chapter!

Tomorrow I name the people in the Tory government who have done their best to ruin this country! And I name all those glib or scheming people who voted for them in 1992!

[Oh, no you don't! Ed]





# business & city

Business news desk: tel 0171-293 2636 fax 0171-293 2093  
BUSINESS & CITY EDITOR: JEREMY WARNER

## Pearson backs ex-Penguin boss ahead of grilling

Nigel Cope

The Pearson board yesterday stood behind Peter Mayer, the former head of Penguin Books in America, saying it believed he had no knowledge of the accounting scandal that has forced the media group to take a £100m charge against its 1996 accounts.

The backing came as Pearson prepares to interview Mr Mayer about the affair today following his return to the US after a six-

week holiday in Europe. A senior Pearson figure said yesterday that Mr Mayer would not prove a reluctant interviewee: "Peter was obviously in charge of the company for a long time and he would insist on being interviewed about this."

Asked if the board believed Mr Mayer was aware of the complex accounting scheme, the Pearson insider said "absolutely not".

Asked if he should have known, they said: "If the audi-

tors did not know and did not discover the cover-up, then you would not necessarily expect the chief executive to know."

This view has been challenged by some City analysts, who say that while they accept that the invoice procedure in publishing houses borders on chaos, certain factors should have set alarm bells ringing. "They were seeing debtor levels rise. Why didn't they question that?" one said.

Mr Mayer became chief ex-

ecutive of Penguin USA in 1978. He resigned late last year to run Overlook Press, a New York-based publishing house he founded in the early 1970s.

Pearson maintains that the complex accounting scheme, which involved book retailers being given unauthorised discounts in return for early payment, was the work of one woman who has since been dismissed.

It is unclear if the woman is still helping Pearson with its in-

quiries into the matter. "She was, I'm not sure if she still is. She's not very happy," Pearson said.

Pearson believes the byzantine system of accounting transactions created to deceive management and auditors was not an act of fraud but a cover-up. So far Pearson has discovered no evidence of any financial gain by the woman that would have provided her with a motive.

As the investigation by new

auditors Price Waterhouse continues, there is concern among City analysts that Penguin's 1997 sales could be affected.

They say retail customers in the US must have known about the discounts and possibly increased their orders accordingly. Some analysts believe that following the termination of the scheme, there is a danger that retailers will buy fewer books from Penguin as they will now be paying higher prices.

"You just don't know what the

profit will be under the new regime," one analyst said.

It is possible that retailers who did not receive the discounts may take legal action to force Penguin to make a retrospective payout. Under an agreement between book publishers and the American Booksellers Association in late 1994, publishers undertook to treat all retailers on equal terms. However, as the agreement was not enshrined in law, it is unclear if it will stand.

## Centrica battles to save £150m in taxes

Chris Godsmark  
Business Correspondent

Centrica, the British Gas supply business which starts life as an independent company today, is negotiating with the Government to slash its tax bill in a move that could boost its profits by around £150m a year.

The discussions are part of Centrica's drive to lessen the huge financial burden from its "take-or-pay" contracts with the leading oil companies to buy gas at well above market prices. The new tax deal revolves around huge sums in petroleum revenue tax levied on gas production in Centrica's vast Morecambe Bay fields, which represent the newly demerged company's main asset.

Under an agreement struck in 1986 with the Oil Taxation Office (OTO), an offshoot of the Inland Revenue, British Gas had to pay tax and royalties on gas it supplied itself from Morecambe Bay on a price believed to be about 27p a therm. However, since 1994 the price of gas has slumped to around 13p.

A senior Centrica source confirmed that negotiations were going on with the OTO. "We are trying to bring prices down in line with those in the market," he said. However, the source added that it would be a tough job to find a solution.

The OTO has the right to set the company's notional gas price for tax purposes because the internal contracts to buy gas from Morecambe Bay only involve Centrica itself. The Government aims to prevent the group from setting an unrealistically low internal price to cut its tax liability, a tactic known as "pampering".

The sticking point in the discussions is the difficulty of putting a value on Morecambe's gas, which provides around 7 per cent of the UK's entire supply. The fields are unique in providing for the massive swings in demand during the year seen in the domestic market, where Centrica has an almost total monopoly. It means Morecambe's gas price is likely to be higher than the spot price in the energy markets.

The dilemma explains why Centrica is seeking to offer a stake in Morecambe Bay to either Esso or Shell as a bargaining tool in its take-or-pay negotiations. The two producers are expected to be the next companies to agree to renegotiate some of the contracts.

Simon Flowers, head of utilities at NatWest Securities, suggested a cut in the Morecambe price of 25 per cent would net Centrica £150m a year with a corresponding loss to Treasury coffers. Over the life of the field, until around 2020, he predicted it would save the company about £1bn in current prices.

## Fate of single currency hangs in the balance

Yvette Cooper

The success or failure of a single currency will depend on decisions made during the next year, according to an authoritative new report.

Professor David Currie of the London Business School argues in "The Pros and Cons of EMU" that the decisions European governments have not yet made - most crucially on the way that fiscal policy will work under monetary union and on reforming labour markets - will determine whether a single currency succeeds or fails.

The report says: "Going forward with EMU does not condemn Europe to failure, nor guarantee its success. And the same goes for abandoning the single currency project... everything will depend on the wisdom of the choices that govern-

ments still have yet to make." The report is the most extensive and balanced so far into the pros and cons of the single currency project, and contrasts with the polemical tone of many reports on the subject.

Commissioned by the Economist Intelligence Unit, the report was sponsored by several leading international banks and companies, including ABN-Amro Hoare Govett, Kleinwort Benson, Prudential and Rothschilds.

The benefits of a single currency discussed in the report include gains to consumers from greater competition and the rationalisation of production across Europe, and low interest rates. The report says that although it is possible that the new euro could become a weak currency, "the euro countries are likely to enjoy low and sta-

ble inflation... because of the attention that has been paid to the design of the European Central Bank."

The drawback, however, is that governments will not be able to use interest rates and exchange rates to respond to particular economic circumstances. The report says: "In many countries this freedom has been greatly abused: the cost of surrendering it is therefore smaller than might be thought. But in countries where monetary policy has been well conducted, the cost is significant."

Although the report is careful to maintain a balanced position and consider all the arguments it says: "We do expect EMU to happen. Far more tentatively we expect it to be a success, though not necessarily for all its members." Professor Currie believes that European unemployment will remain high and even intensify in some parts of the EMU zone.

He argues that coping with unemployment, and increasing the chances of EMU's success will require "appropriate reform of fiscal, welfare and labour market arrangements within the EU to remove undue rigidities in European economies. This would in part require the reform of the stability and growth pact."

The report says that individual nations should be able to borrow more over the economic cycle, to ease national economies through downturns, while maintaining constraints on excessive borrowing in the long run. At the moment the stability pact sets out fines for deficits in excess of 3 per cent of GDP, although it remains to be determined how strictly this would be interpreted. The report also suggests redirecting - and possibly expanding - EU spending towards regional unemployment rather than the Common Agricultural Policy. "It may well mean an evolution over time towards a form of fiscal federalism," it adds.

## Weak businesses 'will be left behind'

Businesses that are not efficient, and banks that are not prepared, will lose out to their competitors under a single currency, according to the report by Professor David Currie, writes Yvette Cooper.

Greater competition and pressure for rationalisation of businesses across Europe will mean that "the inefficient or unresponsive company will find itself under pressure". However, the report says that "the efficient customer-oriented company will have the opportunities of operating across a much larger customer base."

The report says that businesses will benefit considerably from the elimination of uncertainty about exchange rates. It claims that so long as countries in the EMU zone do not introduce further social legislation to burden companies, then "the net benefits in Europe's busi-

nesses could be substantial". However, the adjustments that banks and businesses need to make are considerable, whether they will be inside or outside the new EMU zone.

From adapting cash tills to changing computer accounting systems, from changing the denomination of debt to adjusting the timing of financial reports, the report says that anticipating changes will pay off.

Banks are a special case, according to the report, and will need to prepare extensively for the euro regardless of whether they reside in countries that are in or out of the single currency. The report says that increased competition across national borders in the EMU zone will lead to rationalisation and restructuring of the European banking structure, "with more pan-European players together with niche banks".



Return match: Sandy Anderson has emerged as a potential backer of a new shareholder bid

Photograph: Empics

Nigel Cope

Sandy Anderson has emerged as the potential backer of a group of Nottingham Forest shareholders who are planning a last-minute bid for the club.

The Portersbrook Leasing millionaire, who has already had one bid for the club turned down, is thought to be willing to invest £3m-£4m in an offer being put together by former Forest chairman Fred Reacher and two other directors, Keith Gibson and Jamie Mellors.

The move comes just days ahead of a crunch meeting next Monday when Forest shareholders will vote on the bids made by the Albert Scardino-led group and a rival consortium led by Nigel Wray and local author Phil Soar.

The Anderson-backed pro-

## Anderson waits in wings in Forest fray

posals would see each of Forest's 202 shareholders receive around £50,000 for their stake, far more than under each of the two other bids.

Last week, letters were sent to Forest shareholders by Phil Murdoch, a local antiquities dealer who is also a shareholder, suggesting that they vote against both the Scardino and Wray-Soar bids.

However, Mr Anderson is thought to be unwilling to include in any spoiling tactics. He has made it clear that he will only re-enter the fray if neither of the two bids are successful next week.

Both Mr Reacher and Sandy Anderson were in the directors' box at Forest's FA cup defeat at Chesterfield on Saturday along with other well-known Forest

fans including Chancellor of the Exchequer Kenneth Clarke.

The emergence of a third bid has been greeted with dismay by some Forest shareholders. They say further delays to the ownership question could jeopardise the club's future.

Forest's bankers are said to be ready to call in loans made to the club the day after next week's emergency meeting if neither of the bids is successful.

Larry Lloyd, a former Forest player and now a sports presenter on Radio Trent, said yesterday: "If this happens I fear for the club. I have spoken to some other shareholders and they feel the same."

It is understood that a shareholder buyout of Forest was discussed last autumn but dismissed on the grounds it was not financially viable.

## Utilities 'complacent' over 2000 crisis

The heads of the privatised utilities have been accused of complacency by a government-sponsored taskforce over their response to the looming year 2000 computer crisis, writes Chris Godsmark.

Taskforce 2000, the body set up by the Department of Trade and Industry to publicise the so-called "millennium problem",

wrote to the chief executives of all the utilities in November asking them what preparations their companies had made. However, only a third of the utilities bothered to reply to the letter. Robin Guenier, head of the taskforce, described the response as "extremely thin".

Industry experts have predicted chaos across the world as

computer systems shut themselves down when the date changes. Most programmes can only register the last two digits of the year, so that when 2000 approaches, many will interpret the date as 1900, causing widespread and unpredictable problems.

Taskforce 2000 fears that electricity supplies will be cut off in many places as fail-safe systems are automatically activated.

Through the Taskforce 2000 letter was addressed to chief executives in the utilities, only two replied in person. The rest of the responses were mostly delegated to less senior individuals.

Mr Guenier said he would take up the issue with the companies personally.

## Dr Doom snubs fung shui bulls in Year of the Ox

Stephen Vines  
Hong Kong

Today Hong Kong stockbrokers get down to the first full week of business since the start of the Chinese Year of the Ox, which may not turn out to be quite so bullish as the year's name suggests.

Although sentiment is far from bullish, it seems unlikely that the market will be able to repeat last year's 34 per cent rise when the rat reigned supreme, giving its name to a year that saw tremendous excitement in the property sector. Property shares and property-related in-

terests account for over two-thirds of the underlying assets determining the stock market's valuation.

Therefore, as ever, all eyes are on the property market. If the annual Credit Lyonnais fung shui index predictions are to be believed, residential property prices will break records as "earth-related products" are set for a good year.

The Credit Lyonnais predictions began as little more than a lark but have established an astonishingly good track record for predicting market movements according to ancient Chinese principles of

geomancy. However not all fung shui masters agree with those employed by the Credit Lyonnais brokerage.

Choi Park-lai, one of Hong Kong's most famous masters, takes an opposite view, saying that the elements for the coming year are not good for property projects built from the ground, or in other words the new developments which traditionally drive the market.

Away from geomancy, the number-crunchers in most harking houses are looking forward to a reasonably good year, with the most optimistic predicting that the blue-chip Hang

Seng Index will rise to over 16,500 points, against the 13,404 close at the end of the Year of the Rat. A more general consensus has the market moving up towards 14,500 points.

However, the investment fund manager Mare Faber, known as "Dr Doom", would not be surprised if the market dips below 10,000 points.

China resumes sovereignty over Hong Kong in July and is seemingly determined to see the new era ushered in with a healthy stock market. Last year a senior Chinese official was quoted as saying that the Peking government would intervene

in the market if it saw prices falling substantially. There has been some back-tracking on this pledge since then.

Direct government intervention in the market is unknown in Hong Kong, although there have been instances of government pressure to move interest rates and the government was forced to bail out the futures market after the 1987 crash.

There is no underlying reason to expect such action will be necessary in the coming year. China-related stocks, alongside the property and banking sectors, are high on the buy lists pumped out by local analysts.

The problem for the market is far more likely to reside in Wall Street where a big correction may still be pending and further interest rate rises have not been ruled out. The Hong Kong market sticks tenaciously close to Wall Street.

Nevertheless the Year of the Ox is a historic year for Hong Kong and many of the biggest players also serve as the most influential advisers to the incoming Chinese administration. They have been talking up the territory's prospects and assuring their new patrons that they will do their bit to give a fair wind to the new regime.

STOCK MARKETS									
FTSE 100									
	Index	Close	Week's chg	Change %	1996/97 High	1996/97 Low	1996/97 Range	1996/97 High	1996/97 Low
FTSE 100	4341.00	+33.2	+0.8	0.02	4341.00	3632.30	3.61	4341.00	3632.30
FTSE 250	4606.00	+13.9	+0.3	0.01	4616.00	4015.30	3.35	4616.00	4015.30
FTSE 350	2142.00	+14.3	+0.7	0.33	2142.00	1818.60	3.55	2142.00	1818.60
FTSE SmallCap	2338.92	+16.8	+0.7	0.33	2338.92	1954.06	2.91	2338.92	1954.06
FTSE All-Share	2114.12	+14.2	+0.7	0.67	2114.12	1791.95	3.50	2114.12	1791.95
New York	6998.58	+142.8	+2.1	0.30	7022.44	5932.94	1.95	7022.44	5932.94
Tokyo	18722.00	+855.0	+4.6	2.26	20266.80	17303.65	0.88	20266.80	17303.65
Hong Kong	13113.26	+208.5	+1.6	0.12	13869.24	10204.87	3.21	13869.24	10204.87
Frankfurt	3248.18	+110.2	+3.5	1.10	3248.18	2253.36	1.46	3248.18	2253.36

Source: FT Information

INTEREST RATES									
UK interest rates									
	Rate	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year	5 Year	10 Year
UK	8.06	6.89	7.12	7.67	7.21	7.87	7.87	7.87	7.87
US	5.31	5.68	6.31	5.65	6.60	5.10	5.10	5.10	5.10
Japan	0.50	0.50	2.39	1.97	-	-	-	-	-
Germany	3.19	3.25	5.50	6.14	6.28	-	-	-	-
Bond Yields %									
	1 Month	3 Months	6 Months	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year	5 Year	10 Year	15 Year
UK	8.06	6.89	7.12	7.67	7.21	7.87	7.87	7.87	7.87
US	5.31	5.68	6.31	5.65	6.60	5.10	5.10	5.10	5.10
Japan	0.50	0.50	2.39	1.97	-	-	-	-	-
Germany	3.19	3.25	5.50	6.14	6.28	-	-	-	-
MAIN PRICE CHANGES									
	Highs - Top 3	Price chg	100% chg	100% chg	100% chg	100% chg	100% chg	100% chg	100% chg
Chubb Security	424.5	96	29.2	6.9	29.2	6.9	29.2	6.9	29.2
Unilever	1537.5	170	12.4	8.1	12.4	8.1	12.4	8.1	12.4
Telecom Comms	121.5	12.5	11.5	9.5	11.5	9.5	11.5	9.5	11.5
	Price chg	100% chg	100% chg	100% chg	100% chg	100% chg	100% chg	100% chg	100% chg
Delta	335.5	37.5	10.1	3.0	10.1	3.0	10.1	3.0	10.1

CURRENCIES									
\$/£									
	Close	Week's chg	1 yr Ago	Close	Week's chg	1 yr Ago	Close	Week's chg	1 yr Ago
\$ (London)	1.6210	-0.25c	1.5777	\$ (London)	0.6169	+0.09	0.5503	0.6169	+0.09
\$ (New York)	1.6220	-0.05c	1.5780	\$ (New York)	0.6165	+0.36	0.5502	0.6165	+0.36
DM (London)	2.7334	+1.88pt	2.2623	DM (London)	1.6952	+1.40pt	1.4713	1.6952	+1.40pt
Y (London)	201.328	-11.043	163.180	Y (London)	124.200	-10.455	106.116	124.200	-10.455
£ Index	87.7	+0.5	84.2	£ Index	103.8	+0.3	90.0	103.8	+0.3
OTHER INDICATORS									
	Close	Week's chg	1 yr Ago	Close	Week's chg	1 yr Ago	Close	Week's chg	1 yr Ago
Oil Brent \$	20.47	-1.2	17.03	RPI	154.4	-148.0	13 Mar	154.4	-148.0
Gold \$	345.85	+5.5	424.00	GDP	109.7	+2.6pt	107.0	109.7	+2.6pt
Bank \$	213.95	+3.71	260.75						

### IN BRIEF

John Monks, TUC General Secretary, warned that the introduction of a minimum wage could have a knock-on effect on jobs. Mr Monks, in an interview on LWT's *Dishley* programme, said: "Nobody knows at all what the effects of pay on jobs are... There could or might not be some knock-on." Labour and the TUC support the introduction of a minimum wage and the European Social Charter although Labour has so far refused to set a level for the minimum wage. Shadow treasury secretary Alistair Darling pledged, on the same programme, that a Labour government would not adopt a level which would disrupt the economy.

Pay awards are flat in manufacturing industry but rising in services, according to a report published today. The Confederation of British Industry said its pay database showed pay awards in the manufacturing sector provisionally averaged 3.1 per cent for the three months to the end of December. That is unchanged from the figure for the three months to September and down from 3.7 per cent for the corresponding period in 1995. A third of manufacturers said that their inability to raise prices was keeping down pay awards. However, in the bigger services sector, pay awards increased slightly with awards provisionally averaging 3.6 per cent in the three months to December compared with 3.8 per cent in the previous quarter and 3.4 per cent a year ago.

Investcorp, the Bahrain-based investment group, reported record 1996 profits yesterday. Its net earnings rose 28.6 per cent to \$90.4m, and the group said it planned to double dividends. The strong performance was in large part due to the sale of its remaining holding in Gucci, the Italian luxury goods maker. The company also said it was poised for new acquisitions in Europe and the US, but would not comment on a weekend newspaper report that Investcorp is the front-runner to buy Welcome Break, the chain of motorway service stations, from Granada.

Air UK and KLM are to integrate their sales and marketing functions from April, allowing the co-ordination of the two carriers' UK, European and inter-continental flights via Amsterdam's Schiphol airport. The two have combined turnover in the UK of about £400m. Air UK operates from Stansted and London City airports.

Germany is beating the UK in the



KEVIN GARDINER

"Is it not inconsistent to be worrying about a prospective glut of labour (unemployment) and a shortage (too many pensioners) at the same time?"

## Labouring under delusions about cost of old age

The rise in German unemployment in January was another shocking illustration of how badly Europe's labour markets perform. The immediate social cost of such wasteful levels of unemployment is high and obvious. But the full economic costs are still not fully appreciated. High unemployment contributes to the European pensions crisis - the two problems are largely one and the same.

If European unemployment can be brought down, and employment boosted, the economic burden imposed by the need to provide adequate old-age pensions will automatically become much lighter. Indeed, if continental unemployment and labour force participation rates move closer to British and US levels, old-age pensions might even be funded, in an economic sense, on a pay-as-you-go basis indefinitely. Europe has a labour market problem, not a pension problem. This view is markedly at odds with received wisdom. A sharp rise in the number of European pensioners, relative to the number of adults of working age, is a demographic inevitability. And most continental pension provision is funded and paid from ongoing tax receipts.

As a result, it is taken for granted that Europe will find it difficult to support its pensioner population because the tax base will shrink. The report of the UK Social Security Select Committee in October on unfunded pension liabilities in the EU provides a recent illustration of consensus thinking on the subject. However, the crude

demographic arithmetic is misleading. The age profile of the population is only one of the many factors influencing the dependency burden. Most importantly, adults in work support not just the elderly, but also non-working adults - those who have chosen not to participate in the workforce.

The extent of adult dependency varies considerably across countries, and through time. In the US and the UK, participation rates are high, and unemployment is low, partly reflecting the flexibility of labour supply and demand. And in both countries, participation rates have risen in the last 20 years as household habits have changed. In Europe, participation rates are relatively low, and unemployment is high. As a result, labour as a factor of production is under-utilised. But relatively small changes in the employed portion of the population of working age can have a big effect on the dependency arithmetic.

The point is easily illustrated. Over the next quarter-century, the proportion of the French population aged 65 and above will rise from roughly 15 to 21 per cent, while the proportion of working age will fall slightly, from 65 to 63 per cent. As a result, the ratio of pensioners to potential workers will rise from 23 to 33 per cent, a proportionate increase of more than two-fifths. This is the conventional arithmetic: it suggests a sharp, potentially worrying rise in dependency.

However, only 88 per cent of the French workforce is currently employed; and with a participation rate of roughly 67 per cent this in turn probably represents just 59 per cent of the population of working age, or just 38 per cent of the total population. Meanwhile, if we add the non-working portion of the non-retired adult population to those who are retired, the proportion of adult "dependents" rises from 15 per cent of the total population to 42 per cent.

When the denominator is adjusted downwards accordingly, and the numerator upwards, the current dependency ratio rises sharply, to more than 100 per cent. Thus in France there are already more adult dependents than there are workers. In itself, this simple adjustment makes the problem look dramatically different. If the pattern of participation and employment remains the same, but the population's age structure evolves as expected over the next quarter-century, the resultant rise in the ratio of pen-

sioners to potential workers turns out to be one-fifth, not two-fifths, a much smaller increase. Non-working adults age alongside the workers.

But the arithmetic really becomes interesting if we suppose that in the quarter-century ahead, France is able, via a combination of more flexible working practices and changes in household preferences, to approach the sort of unemployment and participation rates seen in the UK and the US. Then, instead of rising, adult dependency might actually fall by the year 2020, perhaps by as much as one-fifth.

This is a sensational possibility. Of course, it takes no account of details such as the extent of part-time employment and low pay, but it illustrates the potential importance of changes in labour market practice. Other continental economies are in a similar position. In principle, today's pay-as-you-go intra-family transfers (housekeeping, unemployment benefits and student grants could provide tomorrow's pay-as-you-go pensions - if European labour markets reform.

This also underestimates the potential good news. Economies that employ a bigger proportion of their population will be more productive, and the size of the economic cake available for redistribution could be much bigger than is currently predicted on the basis of past growth trends. Thus at one end of the

spectrum is the current spectre of longer working lives and lowered pension entitlements; at the other lies the tantalising prospect of a longer and wealthier retirement.

A less wasteful usage of European labour need not prevent the long-awaited shift from public to private-sector pension schemes on the Continent. In an increasingly unified, flexible labour market in which workers are able and willing to change jobs and location more often than in the past, private savings schemes may become more attractive in their own right. Meanwhile, the growing interest in equities in the European financial markets is likely to give a further boost to the process. But a more productive Europe will be better able to meet the claims on future output which these schemes represent than a Europe that continues to squander its valuable human resources.

The arithmetic illustration above, while extreme, is not beyond the realms of possibility: the UK unemployment rate has moved in a 9-point range in the last quarter-century, the participation rate in a 5-point range. The political pressure to do something about European unemployment is rising. Is it not inconsistent to be worrying about both a prospective glut of labour (unemployment) and a shortage (too many pensioners) at the same time?

Kevin Gardiner is a senior economist at Morgan Stanley International: the views expressed are his own.

The elderly are not the only dependants

	UK	France
Adult dependants	42%	15%
Unemployed	10%	10%
Part-time	10%	10%
Retired	15%	15%
Non-working adults	25%	25%
Working adults	59%	59%
Total population	100%	100%

## UK set for £20bn telecoms boost

Diane Coyle  
Economics Editor

Britain could receive a £20bn trade boost during the next decade from the sweeping free trade pact in telecommunications announced at the World Trade Organisation at the weekend.

The UK, along with the US, is in a strong position to benefit from the possible doubling in size of the \$600bn world telecommunications market. The new deal was announced, to applause in the WTO's Geneva headquarters, just a few hours before the midnight on Saturday deadline for negotiations to end.

Ian Taylor, Britain's science and technology minister, said: "The agreement in Geneva

should usher in an explosive growth in turnover and investment world-wide." The UK telecoms industry already had a turnover twice the size of the car industry, he said.

Charlene Barshefsky, the US trade representative, was equally upbeat. "We expect the agreement will lead to the creation of approximately a million US jobs in the next 10 years," she said. The industries that would benefit ranged from communications companies themselves to equipment makers, electronic publishers and software providers.

Sir Leon Brittan, the EU's Trade Commissioner, said: "In addition to what this deal will do for the telecoms industry, it is a major step also in the creation of the information society."

The UN's International Telecommunications Union predicted that the telecoms industry's world revenues could almost double to \$1,200bn by the year 2000. Neil McMillan, chairman of the WTO talks, predicted a \$1,000bn increase in investment, and predicted the new deal would slash personal and business phone bills.

For all the euphoria about their potential benefits, the WTO talks came close to collapse at several stages. The original deadline for a telecoms trade deal was April 1996, but some countries - most importantly, the US - were concerned about opening their markets without good enough reciprocal access to overseas markets.

A breakthrough agreement in

principle came in December at the WTO's annual meeting in Singapore. But even then there were doubts that enough countries would sign up to make it viable. A late US concession opened the way for the pact, covering 95 per cent of the world's telecoms trade.

Mr Taylor said yesterday that Britain was well placed to take advantage of growing trade and investment in telecommunications. "We were the first in Europe, and one of the first in the world, to introduce competition in 1984. Our experience in the UK of vastly improved services and some £4bn a year being invested in making the UK the most advanced network in the world, has shown what such a deal can offer to the whole world," he said.



Green light: Ian Taylor believes explosive growth lies ahead

## Charlton will field Grade as adviser

Nigel Cope

Charlton Athletic Football club has announced the appointment of former Channel 4 boss Michael Grade as a non-executive director, saying his television and leisure experience "would help to open many doors".

Mr Grade is a keen Charlton supporter and season ticket holder who acquired a stake in the club in the early 1990s when it was redeveloping its ground at the Valley in south London.

Charlton is planning a listing on the Alternative Investment Market which will raise around £6m to continue the development of the Valley into a 20,000 all-seater stadium.

Commenting on the appointment of Mr Grade, who recently quit as head of Channel 4 to become chairman of First Leisure, Charlton chairman Richard Murray said: "His experience of the television and leisure sectors will be invaluable to us as we work to implement our plans to develop Charlton."

He said the planned 8,000-seat stand at Charlton would have space for other facilities, such as a gym or a bowling alley, on which Mr Grade might be able to advise.

Mr Murray said that Charlton's gates had risen by 58 per cent since the club returned to its own ground. He said the club would be profitable this year.

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Colt Cobra	£1,500	£1,500	Asa Office Desk	£50	£2
Porsche 911 Carrera	£2,500	£2,500	100 Computer Games	£50	£22
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Vauxhall Astra	£1,000	£1,000	15-inch Mobile Phone	£350	£11
Canon Scanner	£200	£200	15-inch Mobile Phone	£350	£11
NEC Office Phone System	£200	£200	Large Gasoline	£2,000	£5
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# Monday 17 February 1997: The week starts here

I stood on the pavement outside 52 Poland Street in Soho, looking into a bright new restaurant called Yoi. The establishment is Japanese, in which language the word means roughly what it does in English.

Some hundred people can sit at a winding counter and watch a 60-metre conveyor belt come chugging by bearing 300 plates of sushi and sashimi. The colour band on the plate determines the price: from £1 (lime green) for cucumber sushi, to £2.80 (purple) for a sea slug. Salmon, eel, tuna and prawn are differently coloured and cost in between.

Three robotic drink trolleys cruise their selected paths behind the diners, travelling at the speed of a fast tortoise; they bear cold beers and warm rice wine. The restaurant exercises a hollow glass policy: £1 gets you unlimited still or sparkling water from a tap by your side. Soy sauce, sliced marinated ginger and green-tinted Japanese horse-radish – so strong that a milligram makes you catch your breath while your eyes water – are free.

Across the counter on the staff side of the production line, surgically glined young men and women restock the gaps in the line. A man called Hamish, who does not look Japanese (turns out to come from Framlingham, Suffolk), explains all, and is there should you need further enlightenment or the bill; this is assessed on the number and colour of empty plates in front of you, and ignores the ones you have been able to slip into your jacket pocket.

In a café in Ilfracombe I once heard a waiter call into the kitchen: "Double egg, chips and beans chef, it's for the table in the window."

I asked why the position of the table mattered.

"We always serve bigger portions to the table in the window."

Nothing like that at Yoi, where the voyeurs on the pavement see little but the creeping drink trolley and the backs of contented diners – though many confronted by the endless line of barrel-shaped morsels would probably welcome the sight of a red, white and blue plate bearing fried quail's eggs with *poimmes allumettes*. Yo to egg and chips; to hell with all exclamation marks.

David Austick, who died last week, was elected to Parliament on the same day as me. Between us, we caused an overnight 25 per cent increase in Liberal representation in the House, something that has probably not been done before, and is certainly fairly unique. (I have stopped being the only person not to qualify the word "unique".)

Having "got in" on 27 July 1973, we took our seats at the end of the summer recess, three months later, served five weeks; adjourned for the Christmas recess; and came back to learn of the prorogation announcement for the February 1974 election. But, nevertheless, we had our moments.

On the day we took our seats, the Liberal press office, concerned about what are now called "sound bites", decided that it would be safer to opt for a photo-opportunity and hired a bicycle made for two. Being good Liberals, we argued about who was to ride in front, an argument I finally lost by virtue of age, alphabetical precedence and seniority of service (his result had been announced an hour and 10 minutes before mine). However, as neither of us had ridden a tandem, we stood on either side of the bike and posed for photographers, one of whom asked what were our policies. Austick thought site valuation rating was probably the sexiest one on our agenda.

That afternoon in the chamber, our party, renowned for meeting in telephone boxes, achieved double figures. Jeremy Thorpe regarded us proudly, beamed at Austick, turned to his whip and said, "We've got a backbencher at last."

Austick lost his seat at that first general election; I lasted longer. Had I hung on in, I would be asking the Heritage Secretary at question time whether it is the Government, Camelot or the "good causes" who are beneficiaries of interest on delayed and unclaimed winning lottery tickets, and whether she will give an estimate of the sum involved.

Perhaps Mrs Bottomley will read this and write to me.

Unlike Rosemary Foster, who recorded 225mg on the breathalyzer (see right), the only time I was asked to blow into the bag was when I had not touched alcohol for a month.

I had reversed my vintage Bentley out of the drive into the hedge on the opposite side of the country road, and the engine cut out. After protracted investigation, I discovered that dirt from the hedge was blocking the car's exhaust.

I opened the tool kit, found a long, silver-plated starting-handle and thrust it up the pipe to clear the impediments. A passing police car took one look at what was going on and two men got out, one of whom said: "Excuse me, sir ..."



**Clement Freud**

Many would probably welcome the sight of a red, white and blue plate bearing fried quail's eggs with *poimmes allumettes*



Ralph Fiennes as Ivanov, a hero of tragic proportions

## Time to catch another Fiennes role

**Theatre:** After the stunning *Cherry Orchard* at London's Albery Theatre, *Ivanov*, a lesser-known Chekhov, opens today at the Almeida. This is a play of immense power. It may lack the web-like intricacies of his other works, but easily makes up dramatic ground with a tragic hero of Hamlet proportions – appropriately, since the star, Ralph Fiennes, and director Jonathan Kent last collaborated on *Hamlet* at the Hackney Empire three years ago. The production co-stars Harriet Walter. Only a few tickets are left – £6.50, for the whole run until April – so you'll really have to get a move on. (0171-359 4404) Performance starts: 7.30pm.

From Hodgkin to Hogg, from Travolta to something bizarre in Shropshire, this is the page to help make sure you don't miss out on anything you don't want to miss out on

## Sad to be grey

**Theatre:** If you haven't seen the Howard Hodgkin exhibition by now, where have you been? The vast swathes of colours amidst a grey winter and grey Hayward Gallery are too wonderful and vast to be ignored. Our critic wrote: "Like the smile of the Cheshire Cat in *Alice*, a generalised light-drenched mood seems to be transmitted from the paintings." Soon you'll be too late; it closes this Sunday. Hayward Gallery, London. Mon-Sat 10am-6pm, Tue & Wed until 8pm. Tickets £5, £3.50.

## Angel face

**Film (here):** Reaffirm your faith in love with John Travolta's new film *Michael* (nationwide from Friday). It's a tale about an angel with an endearingly human taste for booze, women and cigarettes.

**Film (there):** The Berlin Film Festival is in its final week. Look in the "Forum" section for young directors. Also *Panna & Nikt*, by the Polish director Andrzej Wajda, on 23 February. Fly from Heathrow on Thursday for the last three days of the festival for £112 return with BA. For the festival: 00 4930 25 48 92 50

## Pigging out

**Pop:** The Longpigs' gig at London's Forum is already sold out. There will be a few £8.50 tickets at the door on Thursday if you'd like to see the angry, Sheffield indie guitar quartet in action.

## Tutti frutti

**Opera:** Spring is here! Farewell to the wintry darkness of Palestrina and Lohengrin at the Royal Opera House (19 and 22 February 6pm). Welcome Jonathan Miller's light pastel-coloured *Così fan tutte* (21 February to 19 March, 7pm, £19.50 - £100).

## Still One-derful?

**Listening:** Today we'll discover whether there's life after the Ginger One-derful. Chris Evans has deserted Radio 1, and so have 500,000 listeners. Today we get the sounds of the north at breakfast with Mark Radcliffe. What's Tony Blackburn up to these days?

## Superwoman. Superman?

**Reading:** *Cosmopolitan*, the magazine that taught women to juggle orgasms, men and work has a long-distance competitor. If you are in Shropshire tomorrow and happen to see a car hurtling through the air, you're probably watching the launch



John Travolta: angelic

of *Bizarre*, a magazine mainly for men. The first issue investigates herbal highs, the curse of Superman and Holland's No 1 orgy organiser. It is on news-stands from Wednesday.

## Cheers, tears

**Drinking (1):** The champion winter beer of Britain will be announced at the Great British Winter Beer Festival, Candleriggs Hall, Glasgow (Thurs-Sat).

**Drinking (2 much):** A woman who drove on a motorway nearly 50 and a-half times over the limit will be sentenced today at Macclesfield, Cheshire. The breath test reading of 225mg given by 23-year-old Rosemary Foster is the highest ever by a woman.

## Where's the beef?

**Politics:** "Beef is perfectly safe and a good product" claimed Douglas Hogg in November 1995. This was disproved less than a year later, and Hogg's handling of the crisis has made him the most vulnerable member of the Cabinet. Now the Labour Party fancies going for the jugular with a motion of censure against him for debate today. It could (though it is unlikely) bring down the Government.

If he survives all the sound and fury, Major will fight back on Thursday with an attack in the Commons on Labour's plans for constitutional reform, which he believes is Blair's Achilles' heel (the Tories don't have one, of course). After this will be a show of unity, at their Local Government Conference in Birmingham on Friday and Saturday. John Major will be speaking at a rally afterwards.

Research: Grania Hehle, James Aulic

## Watch out for ...

Danielle Gatti, new man at the RPO, talks to Malcolm Hayes



**GCSE at 7**  
Do we expect enough of our children?  
EDUCATION +

Winona Ryder talks to Emma Forrest about 'The Crucible'

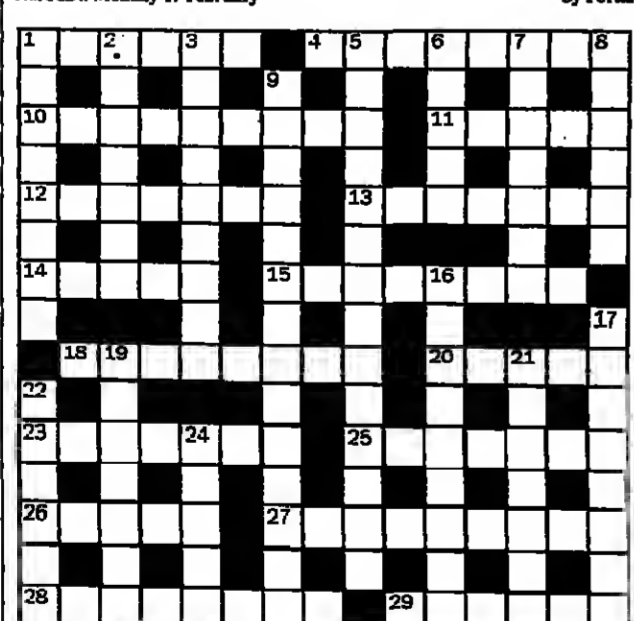


## This week in THE INDEPENDENT

### THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3224, Monday 17 February

By Portia



**ACROSS**  
1 French composer's unmissable sound (6)  
4 Designed to raise money for marine area (5,3)  
10 Deliberately touching object (2,7)  
11 Working inside but minus electricity (2,3)  
12 Concerned with matter of detail (7)  
13 Promise director to get busy (7)  
14 Girl almost grabbing, hot Japanese food (5)  
15 Accepted cutting price of ornament (8)  
18 Approximate time taken to supply fibre (8)  
20 Number of children (5)  
23 Clear one's daughter is involved in case (7)  
25 End product's fine sort of cheese cloth (7)  
26 Hear distant mock attack (5)

27 Discover a second positive (9)  
28 Regimental music? (3,5)  
29 He backs superint (6)

### DOWN

1 On well, getting - many in around tea-time (8)  
2 Looks at including detailed description of what's needed by society (7)  
3 Gracious. Pole's going wild on a drunken spree (9)  
5 Veg that's frozen solid? (7,7)  
6 Due to start off in the boat race (5)  
7 Shocking weapon? (4,3)  
8 Getting on about new mid-day programme (6)  
9 Sweet replaced at centre of pack (10,4)  
16 Strengthen curb alongside drive (9)  
17 Aren't worried about nne royal servant (8)  
19 Woman swallows fashionable stone (7)  
21 Guy's sudden move out of quarters (7)  
22 Choose to meet, being ready at last (3,3)  
24 Celebrates nice French department's set up (5)

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